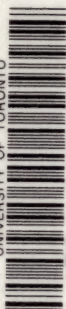


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THE FAITH OF ISAIAH  
STATESMAN AND EVANGELIST



THE  
FAITH OF ISAIAH  
STATESMAN AND EVANGELIST

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To  
THE SACRED MEMORY  
OF  
A. B. DAVIDSON



## PREFACE

The Book of Isaiah is the crowning glory of prophecy. As literature it stands supreme, being distinguished alike for majesty of thought, brilliance of imagination, and elevation of style and diction. Its religious quality is as conspicuous. In no other prophetic book have we so many rays of heavenly light ; in no other are we pointed so clearly forward to the perfect day. And the light that streams from the Book still shines undimmed over the ages. In its light we find light abundant to guide us through the many tangled problems of our own day.

The present volume seeks to interpret the Book afresh to the modern mind. Its various elements are set in their historical framework, the prophecies proper rendered in versions which seek to reproduce as nearly as possible the sense and rhythm of the original, and their distinctive messages applied to the conditions that confront ourselves. As the volume is intended for the general reader, critical discussions have been eliminated. Where departures have been made from the accepted text, the reason will be obvious to the expert.

A number of the translations have already appeared in my *Prophets of the Old Testament*, from which

## Preface

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## CHAPTER I

### THE VISION OF THE LORD

THE early years of Isaiah were passed in a blaze of national prosperity. On the north the strong hand of Jeroboam II. had wrested from Syria the frontier towns of Gilead and even part of the territory of Damascus. Further south he had laid his yoke on Moab, the restless enemy of Israel. Meanwhile his contemporary, Uzziah the Great of Judah, had carried his arms in victory over the Philistines, Arabs and Edomites, recovering from the latter the seaport of Elath, on the Gulf of Akaba, which Solomon had made the channel of commerce with the East. Thus the bounds of Israel were extended beyond their ideal range "from the gateway of Hamath to the Dead Sea." With military success came wealth and luxury. Traders flooded the land. Great ships of Tarshish brought merchandise from every part. Gold and silver abounded. Under Uzziah's personal auspices Jerusalem decked herself with lordly towers and battlements, houses and palaces of hewn stone and ivory, furnished with all the comforts and refinements of advancing civilisation. Outside the capital, the king devoted himself

## The Faith of Isaiah

especially to husbandry, planting out fields and vineyards, stocking the pastures with cattle, digging wells, and raising towers for the protection of the labourers, so that the land once more rustled with corn, and flowed with milk and wine. In the eyes of his subjects, therefore, Uzziah must have appeared a second Solomon, predestined to restore the shattered fortunes of Judah. But when they looked to see the crown placed on his glory, "the Lord smote the king" with leprosy, and his reign closed in darkness and depression (B.C. 740).

The blow fell with peculiar poignancy on the sensitive soul of Isaiah. In contrast to his prophetic forerunners, Amos and Hosea, he was a true-born son of Jerusalem, to whom every stone of the city was dear, and whose youthful hopes and ideals were wrapped up in its welfare. He was apparently a man of high birth and breeding, an aristocrat in every instinct of his nature, a friend of king and courtiers, for whom Uzziah was "the anointed of the Lord." That a king who had so long basked in the sunshine of God's favour should now be the victim of His wrath was the reversal of all he had been taught to believe in. As he brooded over the mystery, it must have seemed to him as if Jehovah had altogether forsaken His people, and left them without either helm or anchor. But, like another troubled spirit, he "went into the sanctuary of God," and there the scales fell from his eyes, and he



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saw the Lord in His majesty, the great Ruler of men and nations, in whose service is perfect freedom, peace and joy.

The vision came "in the year that king Uzziah died." Commentators have usually placed it just after Uzziah's death. In a striking lecture Professor A. B. Davidson has pictured the patriotic young Jew, deeply moved by the end of the long-drawn tragedy, joining the mournful throng that filled the palace to pay the last tribute of respect before the bier of the dead sovereign, and then passing to the Temple to render homage to the King invisible, whose sceptre should never fall from stricken hands.<sup>1</sup> More likely it was before the tragedy ended in death, but when the weight of impending evil hung heavy on earnest hearts.<sup>2</sup> At all events, the scene was the threshold of the Temple, where Isaiah had gone to worship. In front of him stood the door leading to the inner shrine, with the Ark as the visible witness to the Divine, and near it the altar of sacrifice and the brazen serpent, the emblem of heavenly help and healing. The choirs pealed forth their choruses, and the smoke of the sacrifice ascended to heaven, when, lo! as Isaiah prayed, the outward symbolism vanished, and the eternal

<sup>1</sup> *The Called of God*, pp. 187ff.

<sup>2</sup> Had the vision taken place after Uzziah's death, it would probably have been dated "in the first year of Jotham." Moreover, Is. i. 1 suggests the beginning of the prophet's ministry in the lifetime of Uzziah.

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realities themselves were unveiled before his spiritual imagination. Through the open door he now saw Jehovah in Person seated upon a throne "high and lifted up"—beyond all contact with human imperfection and sin—the skirts of His flowing robe filling the Temple—carrying the touch of His influence into every niche and corner of the building—while round the throne were shining companies of seraphim—probably transfigurations of the brazen serpent<sup>1</sup>—floating before God's presence and singing in responsive chorus :

"Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of Hosts ;  
His glory filleth the whole earth " (vi. 3).

In the song of the seraphim Isaiah has borne home to him in music the burden of his future ministry. For him Jehovah was to be throughout "the Holy One of Israel." Holiness has now come to imply transcendent purity of character ; but to the Hebrew mind it meant primarily *remoteness, separation*. God was holy by virtue of His being separate from men, infinitely exalted above their creatural conditions and limitations. Holiness is thus virtually the equivalent of majesty. The Holy One of Israel is King of kings and Lord of lords.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The seraphim were serpent-like figures (originally personifications of the lightning), though Isaiah appears to have conceived them in more human fashion, with faces, mouths, hands and feet.

<sup>2</sup> Holiness "describes God's transcendent majesty, His absolute Godhead."—Davidson, *The Called of God*, p. 192.

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As such He might appear inaccessible to the prayers of His people. But the other side of holiness is glory. The glory of God is the nimbus of light that accompanies His presence, and through which He reveals His eternal grace and goodness, even while concealing His face (Exod. xxxiii. 18). In Solomon's Temple it appeared as a luminous cloud that permeated the house (1 Kings viii. 11). The idea is hence extended to cover the revelation of God's character in general—the radiance of His holiness, purity, justice and love.<sup>1</sup> And this radiance “filleth the whole earth,” flooding both city and country, market-place and home, “the round ocean and the living air, the blue sky” and the heart and mind of man, transforming human life into the image of the Divine, and making “every common bush afire with God.”

Such a God is worthy to be worshipped “in the beauty of holiness.” And this worship is finely suggested by the wings of the seraphim. “With twain he covered his face,” in token of reverence; “and with twain he covered his feet” (the lower parts of his body), to screen them from the glance of God's searching purity; “and with twain he did fly”—on Divine commissions through all the world. The three pairs thus symbolise the three-fold worship that God loves and expects of His

<sup>1</sup> “Glory is the expression of holiness, as beauty is the expression of health.”  
—G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, I. p. 68.

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children : the worship of reverence, purity, and service. If He be the Holy One, exalted over all, we must needs worship Him in reverence and awe. If He be "too pure of eyes to behold iniquity," we must needs have our impurities removed, for only "the pure in heart shall see God." And if He be the God who freely removes our impurities, we must needs serve Him with joyful hearts, "in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

As the seraphic strains were wafted to Isaiah's ears, his whole being rose in response. He longed with all his heart to join those choral bands : his chief desire was to worship God, as they did, with mingled reverence, purity, and service. For already he was conscious of great gifts of mind and speech which he would fain consecrate to this worship. But in the immediate presence of the Holy One he felt how unclean were his imaginations and how deeply tarnished with self the purest offering of his lips. And were he himself clean in heart and speech, he dwelt "in the midst of a people of unclean lips," a people who lifted up their voices, no doubt, in praise and prayer, but whose impure lives made their worship a perpetual blasphemy. Thus he shrunk back bewildered and ashamed. In his nervous dread the very foundations seemed to shake beneath him, and a great cloud rose to obstruct his gaze—the darkness of human impurity showing thick



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and black before the dazzling radiance of God's holiness. And for the moment he thought himself undone. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, even Jehovah of Hosts" (ver. 5).

Conviction of sin may pierce the heart of the prodigal, when he comes to himself and realises how sorely he has wounded the Father by his shameful deeds. But it comes also—and with yet more overwhelming force—to noble souls who have kept themselves free from "the great transgression," but in some hour of personal communion with God have caught the vision of His surpassing holiness, and in the light of it have read the full story of their own unworthiness. Isaiah belongs to the goodly fellowship of "twice-born" men like Peter and Saul of Tarsus, Augustine and Luther, Cromwell and Milton and Bunyan, who were driven in their agony of guilt to cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," but whose very despair was the measure of their future greatness in the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Temptations in the Wilderness, Choices of Hercules, and the like, in succinct or loose form, are appointed for every man that will assert a soul in him and be a man. Let Oliver take comfort in his dark sorrows and melancholies. The quantity of sorrow he has, does it not mean withal the quantity of sympathy he has, the quantity of faculty and victory he shall yet have? Our sorrow is the inverted image of our nobleness. The depth of our despair measures what capability and height of claim we have to hope."—Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (Centenary Edition), I. pp. 50 f.

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None of these men really wished to banish God from their lives. With all their shrinking—and even their prayer that He should leave them alone—they yearned after His friendship. And the God who sees not as man sees granted them their desire. Thus Isaiah describes his experience : “ Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, with a glowing stone in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar ; and he laid it on my mouth, and said, Lo ! this hath touched thy lips, and thy guilt passeth away, and thy sin is purged ” (ver. 7).

The prophet here uses a symbol drawn from common life. In cooking, baking, boiling milk, and the like, stones were made red hot at the central hearth, and then applied to the various objects in question. The image thus naturally suggests the conveyance of spiritual fire from the altar to Isaiah. Fire burns, and so purifies : when the young man’s lips were touched, his sin was not merely forgiven but burned out of him, and he stood before God pure, as He is pure. Fire likewise fuses the primordial elements into one glowing mass : thus the fire from the altar welded the manifold aspects of his personality, and inspired them with one consuming aim and purpose. Fire expands, transforms, and consecrates : thus his outlook on life was enlarged, his ambition set heavenward, his whole being brought into vital relation with the Eternal

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The result was inevitable. "I heard the voice of Jehovah saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (ver. 8).<sup>1</sup>

When the sincere spirit is once endowed with the wings of reverence and purity, it soon takes on the wings of service. For there can be no true worship without service. God has His plan to fulfil, and He calls on each man to assume his rightful share in the task. It may be to play the prophet's part, to preach the Gospel at home and abroad, and in this direct way help towards filling the world with the knowledge of the Lord. It may be, like Cromwell, to champion the cause of human liberty, or, like Milton and Bunyan, to consecrate the imagination to heavenly poetry or allegory. It may be the simplest service in the office, the workshop, or the home. For the old proverb is profoundly true—*laborare est orare*, "work is prayer"—if it be done in the right spirit, with a single eye to God's glory. The devout mason of Ecclefechan tried to honour his Master by the uprightness and stability of the walls he built; and his illustrious son read the witness, and in after years thanked God

<sup>1</sup> The call proper ends with ver. 8, the rest of the chapter being occupied with the results of Isaiah's ministry. As the account of the call was not written till the close of the Syro-Ephraimitic war (c. 733 B.C.), it is probable that it has been coloured to some extent by reflection on subsequent experience. Skinner, however, insists that "we have no right to imagine" any such influence (*Isaiah*, rev. edit., I. p. 45).

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for its message to himself.<sup>1</sup> We too can serve Him by every word we speak, and every deed we do, however trivial they may appear in themselves. A stone well cut and laid, the blow of a hammer sped straight from the shoulder, a business deal carried through with clean hands and an honest heart, a brave word or generous act, worthy ambitions, supported by earnest endeavours to do the right, straight thing, consistent adherence to just and noble aims—these are all among the things “true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report” which the servant of Jesus Christ is exhorted to follow after, so that the Kingdom of God may be advanced among men. Or even if the talent with which we hoped to serve Him be “lodged with us useless”—through no fault of ours—there is still the service of patient waiting.

“Who best

Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
Is kingly : thousands at His bidding speed,  
And post o’er land and ocean without rest ;  
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

<sup>1</sup> “Nothing that he undertook to do but he did it faithfully and like a true man. I shall look on the houses he built with a certain proud interest. They stand firm and sound to the heart all over his little district. No one that comes after him will ever say, ‘Here was the finger of a hollow eye-servant.’”—Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 4.



## CHAPTER II

### THE GOSPEL OF HOLINESS

IN a real sense the prophet's call strikes the key-note of his subsequent activity. The premonition of judgment which came to Amos in the solitude of the desert supplied the main theme of his preaching at Samaria and Bethel, while Hosea's sympathy with the loving heart of Jehovah, which he learned through the violated sanctities of his home, made him the messenger of redemption. Isaiah was as clearly called to be the prophet of holiness. His task was to bring the vision of God's holiness to bear as effectively on the life of the people as on his own conscience and will.

The root idea of holiness we have found to be separation. God was holy by virtue of His being separate from men. In like manner, persons, places, and acts were counted holy when set apart or consecrated to God's service. The priests who administered at the altar were holy; the Temple and its ritual were holy; the new moon and Sabbath were "holy days"; and festal assemblies and sacrifices were holy works. In itself, therefore, holiness had no ethical import. It might even be the handmaid of gross immorality, the prostitutes

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who frequented the sanctuaries being known as "holy men and women." The filling of the concept with ethical significance is one result of prophetic teaching, and arose directly from the prophets' thought of God. To them holiness was likeness to God in the fullest implication of the term. Hosea had already identified the Divine holiness with love. Jehovah was "the Holy One in the midst" of Israel, because of His mercy and compassion (Hos. xi. 9). The holy man would thus be the loving man, the kindly, considerate, brotherly man. Isaiah rounded out the idea. He had learned to know Jehovah as a God of absolute purity, in whose presence no uncleanness or corruption can abide, as well as the Lord of grace and goodness, who freely forgives men their iniquities, and rejoices in their fellowship and service. Thus for him holiness in man combined the two elements of justice and love, purity and mercy, uprightness and humanity. The mirror is held up to us in the opening chapter :

"What care I for the multitude of your sacrifices,  
Jehovah doth say.

I am sated with offerings of rams,  
And the fat of fed beasts ;  
In the blood of bullocks and he-goats  
I take no delight.

When ye come to behold my face,  
Who seeketh this at your hand ?

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So trample my courts no more,  
For vain are oblations !

An abhorrence to me is the smoke of your sacrifices,  
Your holy days are a sin ;  
New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies,  
I cannot away with.

Your feast days and festivals  
My soul doth hate ;  
They are a burden upon me—  
I am weary of bearing them.

When ye spread out your hands,  
I will hide mine eyes from you ;  
Even when ye multiply your prayers,  
I will not listen.

Your hands are full of bloodshed ;  
Wash yourselves clean !  
Put away the evil of your doings  
From before mine eyes !

Cease to do evil, learn to do well,  
Pursue after justice !  
Set right the oppressor, judge the fatherless,  
Plead the cause of the widow !” (i. 11-17).

In these stern words the whole current theory of holiness is challenged. For reverent worship Isaiah had all due respect. He had himself found God in the Temple, and he would bar the door against



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none who thus sought Him in sincerity. But the worship which was a mere form of words or ritual acts was a gross travesty of holiness, while that which was assumed as a cloak to cover injustice or oppression was sacrilege in God's sight. The only offering He cared for was that of a righteous life. If men would worship Him, therefore, in the beauty of holiness, let them turn from their evil ways, and give themselves to truth and honest dealing one with another, the active pursuit of social justice, the helping of the poor and needy, the overthrow of wickedness in all its protean shapes, and the uplifting of humanity as the governing ideal in every sphere of life.

In laying the emphasis on these things, Isaiah is in line with the whole trend of prophetic teaching. Amos had poured the vials of Divine scorn upon the worshippers of his day, who sought to please God by the din of their songs and the harsh strumming of their lyres. "But let justice roll down as waters, and right as an ever-flowing stream!" (Amos v. 24). Hosea had appealed in Jehovah's name for "love instead of sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than offerings" (Hos. vi. 6). Isaiah's rural contemporary, Micah, summed up what is well-pleasing to God in the threefold formula: "to do justice, and to delight in love, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic. vi. 8). Jeremiah and Ezekiel are equally insistent in their demand for social justice and benevolence as the outward expression of true

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religion (Jer. xxii. 3 ; Ezek. xviii. 7ff.). With its dying breath, in the person of Malachi, prophecy raises its plea for the poor and lonely, the widow, the orphan and the stranger, above all, the loyal daughters of the covenant deserted by their treacherous husbands, protesting that the worship which tolerates such offences is to "kindle God's altar in vain" (Mal. i. 10ff.). And when faith was led captive beneath the iron yoke of the Pharisees, Jesus recalled men to the old ways of truth and life. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21). "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye tithe mint and dill and cummin, and omit the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These ought ye to have done, without leaving the other undone" (xxiii. 23).

The holiness which Jesus and the prophets preached is thus poles apart from the anæmic type of piety which is so common among us. It is intensely ethical, virile, heroic. It is the "moral equivalent of war" that the new age is calling for. The true saint is a soldier like Cromwell, who believes in God, "not on Sundays only, but on all days, in all places, and in all cases,"<sup>1</sup> and is ready in His name to do battle against every form of selfishness, oppression and sin—a Crusader of the

<sup>1</sup> *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, I. p. 51.

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type dreamed of by Blake, who fights, not to deliver the Holy Place from the hands of the infidel, but to build up Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land,"<sup>1</sup> to make the earth itself a Holy Place, where God shall be all and in all.

But who is sufficient for these things? "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." To win victory in this good fight, we must be baptised with the Spirit of purity that comes from God alone. And if our hands are stained by cruel and sinful deeds, and our hearts by low, degrading passions? We may wash ourselves with lye, but "here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Nor will the manifold charms of Nature and human fellowship avail to purge the heart from its defilement. But that which is impossible with men is more than possible with God. Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.

"Come now, let us be right with each other,  
Jehovah doth say:

Though your sins be like scarlet,  
They may be white as snow;  
Though they be red like crimson,  
They may become as wool" (i. 18).

<sup>1</sup> Fragment from *Milton*.

## The Gospel of Holiness

Here Isaiah reaches his hand across the centuries to Jesus Christ. He too summoned men to the high imperative of holiness. But His Gospel of holiness implied forgiveness as well as the single-minded pursuit of righteousness. He went about among men with the gracious tidings of the Father in heaven, who yearns after the prodigal, follows him in sympathy through all his weary wanderings, feels the anguish of his degradation far more keenly than himself, wrestles for his recovery, and will not cease to wrestle until He has welcomed him back to the peace and joy of the homeland. As the Son of the Father, He spent His own life in seeking and saving the lost ; and at the end He died, " the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God."

This Gospel has been assailed, however, as the direct negation of moral principle. If the sinner be thus easily forgiven, it is claimed, he escapes the just punishment of his sins. But forgiveness does not abrogate the law that " whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." David's repentance did not restore the life of the child who was the fruit of his sin ; nor did the faith of the penitent thief spare him the last agonies of crucifixion. In like manner, forgiveness will not redeem men's wasted opportunities, or in any miraculous way heal the diseases contracted through vice ; still less does it recover the bloom of purity and health for the



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hapless victims of wrong-doing. For it is not the simple remission of the penalties of sin. It strikes to the very root of the matter—it deals the mortal blow at sin itself. Forgiveness is nothing less than the restoration of the sinner to the friendship and love of the Father, and thereby also his return to the pathway of holiness, his whole nature inspired with the “expulsive” but equally uplifting “power of a new affection.” Thus step by step he rises above himself and his old besetting sins, growing in strength and righteousness of character, ever nearer to the perfect stature of Christ. “Do we then annul the law through faith? God forbid! We rather establish the law.”

If forgiveness be the purest expression of the grace of God, it is no less truly the crown of holiness in man. Jesus not merely saw in the spirit of forgiving love the mirror of heavenly perfection, but He made readiness to forgive others a necessary condition of God’s forgiveness. “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. . . . Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. v. 40ff.). “If ye forgive men their trespasses,

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your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (vi. 14ff.).

With us, too, forgiveness is no easy condoning of evil. Like the love from which it springs, it is a glowing passion, which opens its heart to the sinner, yet burns with indignation against his sins. It may even go hand in hand with punishment. For the end of forgiveness is not to shield the sinner from "the slings and arrows" of the law, but to win him from the service of evil, and so help him to overcome the enemies of his soul. And he may have to pay in full before he will turn from his evil habits to live the new life of integrity and honour. As with the individual, so with the nation. We may forgive while exacting the due measure of justice. Apart from justice, indeed, our forgiveness would be hollow, false, immoral. Based upon justice, it is holy, and even Divine. For the sinful nation is redeemed, while right is established as the ruling principle on earth. Thus forgiveness, like wisdom, is "justified of her children."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The law said: 'Thou shalt not kill;' the Gospel says: 'Thou shalt not hate.' It is possible to kill without hating."

"The Gospel says: 'Love your enemies.' That means: 'Try to make them your friends.' It may be necessary to kick one's enemy in order to make friendship possible. A nation may be in the same predicament, and be forced to fight in order to make friendship possible."—Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, p. 187.

## CHAPTER III

### NATIONAL IRRELIGION

THE devout life has been too often represented as a solitary Pilgrim's Progress from the City of Destruction to the pearly gates and blessed mansions of Heaven. The prophet's outlook was wider in its range. He longed to see the whole nation a people of Jehovah, its cities flowing with salvation and its streets jubilant with praise. And for him the criterion of national no less than personal religion was to "set right the oppressor, judge the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow."

Tried by this test, the people of Judah, with all their pretensions to piety, were as unclean in Jehovah's sight as Isaiah had found himself in presence of the Divine holiness. So far from pursuing justice and mercy, the rich capitalists of Jerusalem used the very troubles of the poor as the occasion for their own aggrandisement. The victories of Uzziah had filled their treasuries with gold and silver, but they had left the peasant class plunged the more deeply in debt. Thus the land that had passed from father to son, the "portion" which the poor man valued as highly as his life, was



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thrown into the market, and the larger proprietors added house to house, and field to field, till there was no room for others in the neighbourhood. As mischievous was the way in which men spent their wealth. While the ousted peasantry lay crushed under the heel of their oppressors, robbed alike of their livelihood and their self-respect, often without a cloak in which to wrap themselves for the night, the rich sat long at their feasts, inflamed with wine and strong drink, their ladies meantime tripping along, arrayed in all the bravery of their fine dresses and jewellery, heedless of the doing of Jehovah and the cries of His people. The inequalities of wealth led even to the wresting of the poor man's rights. The rich had their friends in court, and could purchase judgment for a bribe ; the poor had none to plead their cause, and thus lost by default. So gross, indeed, was the perversion of justice that it seemed as though the rulers of Judah possessed no longer the sense of right and wrong. They called evil good, and good evil ; darkness light, and light darkness. They harnessed themselves to evil as with cart-ropes, and actually defied God to show His hand in Providence. " Let Him speed on, hasten His work, that we may see it ; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh, that we may know it ! "

Though the natural associate of the upper classes, Isaiah was as full of sympathy for the poor, and of righteous wrath against the follies and wickedness

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of the rich, as the more democratic Amos had been. He saw how impossible it was for a nation tainted with vices like these to endure. Thus in language kindled at the altar of holiness he inveighs against the evil-doers as traitors to the commonwealth of Judah, dragging their people with them on the steep descent to ruin. Only if they turned from their unholy ways, and for the future exalted justice and brotherhood as the twin standards of life, was there any hope for themselves or the nation as a whole. For a Day of Jehovah was soon to come, which would test their works as by fire, burning up all that was false and impure, leaving only the "holy seed" as the fine gold from the crucible.

As the object of special rebuke the prophet singles out the pride of "the daughters of Zion," who aped the fashions of the heathen around them, violating the natural modesty of women, and instilling wrong ideals into the minds of their children. For this their glory shall be turned into shame, and themselves be left unprotected and dishonoured on the day of trial.

"Because they are grown haughty,  
The daughters of Zion,  
And walk with outstretched neck,  
And ogling with their eyes,  
Mincing ever as they walk,  
And jingling with their feet ;

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Therefore the Lord will smite their crown with  
a scab,

And will lay bare their shame ;  
Instead of perfume there shall be rottenness,  
And instead of a girdle, a rope ;  
And instead of well-dressed hair, baldness,  
And instead of festal robes, sackcloth.

And seven women shall lay hold  
On a single man on that day,  
Saying, We will eat our own bread,  
And wear our own raiment ;  
Only by thy name let us be called,  
Remove our reproach ” (iii. 16f., iv. 1).

The most deliberate impeachment of the moral disorder of the times, however, is contained in the sixfold Woes of chap. v., where Isaiah probes the motives and workings of evil with merciless edge.

I.—The core of the malady he finds in the sin of *monopoly*.

“ Woe ! they that join house to house,  
And lay field to field,  
Till there be no more room  
In the midst of the land !  
Therefore Jehovah of Hosts  
Hath sworn in mine ears :  
‘ Of a surety many a house  
Shall become a desolation—

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Even houses great and goodly,  
Without inhabitant.

For ten acres of vineyard  
Shall yield but one bath,  
And an homer of seed  
Shall yield but an ephah.<sup>1</sup> ”

(v. 8-10).

Isaiah has here exposed for all time the radical vice of monopoly. The tendency which has so deeply infected the commercial life of our own age as well as theirs—to gather the sinews of industry, in land and capital, within a few irresponsible hands—is the very incarnation of selfishness, exalting itself at the expense of human personality. While the rich pile up their substance, the people as a whole are exploited for gain—degraded from their high dignity as the sons and daughters of God into mere instruments for acquiring wealth that others may enjoy. Though the prophet thus lays the stress on the moral aspect of the case, he has an equally sure sense of the economic results of monopoly. In his eyes it leads to depopulation and the curtailment rather than increase of the staff of life. The poor are driven from their inheritance, and the natural fruit of their labour is diminished.

<sup>1</sup> The acre was as much as a pair of oxen could plough in a day, and therefore considerably larger than our acre. The bath contained between eight and nine gallons of wine. The ephah was a dry measure of similar capacity to the bath, and the homer was ten times the size of the ephah.



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On the former head there will be general agreement. The rural depopulation which creates so ominous a problem in older countries is the direct results of landed monopoly, with its continuous encroachments on the rights and liberties of the people. But this problem is part of a much larger one—the housing problem—which affects all nations alike, and on the happy solution of which their welfare mainly depends. The basis of society must ever be the family. So long as a nation gives birth to healthy families, growing up amid bright, pure surroundings, in the love of God and honour, it will go on prospering and to prosper. But let family life on any great scale degenerate into the miserable counterfeits of home which we find in our city slums, and the nation will sooner or later die of festering corruption at the heart. The root of the trouble here also lies in landed monopoly. Thus salvation can be found only in breaking the monopoly, and recovering the land for the legitimate needs of the people. Happily, statesmen of all shades of opinion have begun to recognise the justice of this demand, and have already taken important steps to carry it into effect. But the goal will not be reached until “every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig-tree with none to make him afraid.” And this end is sure; “for the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts hath spoken it.” (Mic. iv. 4).

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The other side of the question may call forth a challenge. It is urged in defence of monopolies that concentration results in increased, because more efficient, production. From an abstract point of view this may be quite correct. But in the ultimate analysis the prophet's verdict is justified. For the frankly expressed aim of the monopolist is to control the market—that is, in effect, to restrain the outflow of the commodities of life—for his own personal advantage, and with absolute indifference to the hardships he may thus inflict on the poor. Monopoly thus constitutes one of the gravest menaces to social well-being, and its successful control is among the most pressing problems of statesmanship. The scientific economist may be content to trace the genesis and evolution of the system without pronouncing any moral judgment on the tendency in itself. But the Christian reformer must look deeper, and view the subject as it bears on personal life and character, allowing no individual interests to outweigh the paramount claims of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the danger of monopoly in modern times, see President Wilson, *The New Freedom* (Everyman's Library), pp. 129ff. After a careful analysis of the economic effects of monopoly, he concludes, "Therefore the big trusts, the big combinations, are the most wasteful, the most uneconomical, and, after they pass a certain size, the most inefficient, way of conducting the industries of this country" (p. 141). For "monopoly always checks development, weighs down natural prosperity, pulls against natural advance" (p. 207). But its most baneful results he finds, like Isaiah, in the degradation of humanity. "Take the thing as a whole, and it looks strangely like economic mastery over the very lives and fortunes of those who do the daily work of the nation" (p. 166). "Pro-

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2.—Closely linked with the sin of monopoly is that of *luxury*.

“Woe! the heroes for drinking wine,  
And the valiant in mingling strong drink—  
They that rise up early of mornings  
To follow after strong drink,  
That tarry late in the evening,  
Till wine doth inflame them—  
Whose feasts are lute and harp,  
Timbrel and flute and wine,  
But the doing of Jehovah they heed not,  
And the work of His hands they regard not!  
Therefore my people are exiled,  
Exiled for lack of knowledge;  
Their nobles are famished with hunger,  
And their rabble parched with thirst”  
(vv. 22, 11-13).

In this outburst of holy irony Isaiah has revealed luxury also in its true colours. It may be argued

erty is an instrument of humanity; humanity isn't an instrument of property. And yet when you see some men riding their great industries as if they were driving a car of juggernaut, not looking to see what multitudes prostrate themselves before the car and lose their lives in the crushing effect of their industry, you wonder how long men are going to be permitted to think more of their machinery than they think of their men" (p. 214). "So we must put heart into the people by taking the heartlessness out of politics, business, and industry. We have got to make politics a thing in which an honest man can take his part with satisfaction, because he knows that the boss and the interests have been dethroned. Business we have got to untrammel. Industry we have got to humanise. We have got to cheer and inspirit our people with the sure rewards of social justice and due reward, with the vision of the open gates of opportunity for all" (p. 227).



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that a man may do what he pleases with his own, and that, if he loves luxury, he is free to indulge himself to his heart's content. But to the prophet indulgence is as hideous a crime against God and man as the cynical cruelty of the monopolist. All honest wealth is from God; therefore the lord of wealth is responsible to God for the stewardship entrusted to him. Man is likewise a social being, to whom wealth comes, if it does come, through the various channels of social life that converge on him; thus society also has its interest in the destination of wealth. To spend one's means on pleasure, as if that were the end of life, is unsocial and inhuman. If the spirit of self-indulgence affects large classes of society, it will spell deterioration and ruin. History is full of pregnant examples: the captivity of Israel and Judah, the extinction of the light of Greece, the downfall of Imperial Rome, and the sweeping aside of an effeminate Christendom by the sturdy hordes of Islam. Were it not that one believed in the sanity of the great body of the people, one must have viewed with grave concern the vulgar displays of luxury that in pre-war days characterised the leaders of social life, in both Europe and America, and the mad quest for pleasure that infected the minds of the masses as well. For the love of luxury is not confined to the wealthy. Little is needed now to satisfy the taste for pleasure, and the poor

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are only too prone to follow the lead of their masters. One has, naturally, no desire to restrain the innocent enjoyments of the people. Recreation is good, and refined surroundings are good. Nevertheless, the nation that is to grow great and prosperous must have its heart set on the nobler issues of life. Levity saps alike the moral and physical strength of a people; responsibility to God and duty is the mainspring of life.<sup>1</sup>

3.—There were two special forms of luxury that had acquired an ominous hold over Israel and are still much with us—vices that tend more than any others to corrupt the national fibre—*intemperance* and *impurity*.

The first of these evils Isaiah has set in the forefront of his charge against luxury. For to him it was the direct cause of intellectual as well as moral and economic “exile.” It robbed the people of their wits, inflamed their baser passions, unfitted them for the serious business of life, and thus left them impoverished in all other good things. The lapse of centuries has not blunted the edge of the prophet’s attack. Intemperance is still the most deadly enemy of social progress. It not only wrecks hearts and homes, wastes the resources of the nation, impairs its efficiency, and weakens its moral tone, but

<sup>1</sup> “The philosophers of old times and the fathers of the Church alike condemned luxury in the strongest terms, and they were right in so doing. It is pernicious to the individual and fatal to society. Primitive Christianity reprobated it in the name of charity and of humanity; political economy condemns it in the name of utility, and right in the name of equity.”—E. de Laveleye, *Luxury*, p. 2.

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it is also the prolific source of poverty, disease, and crime. In all advanced communities, therefore, the legislature has been compelled to take strong measures for the control and even prohibition of the liquor-traffic. Such measures are wholly for good. Judging by their results in the United States and Canada, the Temperance reformer may well thank God and press forward with courage. But restraint is not enough. Intemperance is the perversion of healthy human instincts. In part it is the reaction either from the *ennui* of idleness or from the weariness induced by unwholesome conditions of labour ; in part it is an attempt to escape from the general sordidness of life in the slums ; in large part also it is an expression of the craving for human fellowship. Temperance reform must thus go hand in hand with constructive social reform. The idler must be impressed with a due sense of the dignity of labour ; at the same time the lot of the labourer must be humanised. The conditions under which he works must be steadily ameliorated, his wages raised to a point adequate at least to the support of a decent family life, and his surroundings made brighter and cleaner. Worthier provision must likewise be made for his social needs. Along such lines effective "substitutes for the saloon" have been found in model homes built and managed on enlightened business principles, open spaces, parks and playgrounds, gymnasia, baths, halls, libraries, club and

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reading-rooms, maintained for the common good, and free to the poorest of the people, and a broad policy of public education, aimed at both interesting and elevating the mind. But after all the true bulwarks against intemperance are moral and religious. Only by "self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control" does man reach to sovereign freedom; only through fellowship with noble souls does he win the fuller life he craves. And in both respects the Gospel of Christ is the true "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Through faith in Him the weakest has strength to overcome temptation, while the conscience of the most selfish is quickened to the claims of duty and brotherhood. "All things are lawful; but all things are not expedient. All things are lawful; but all things are not edifying. Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbour's good. . . . Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Put no stumbling-block in the way either of Jews or of Greeks or of the church of God; even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own interest but the interest of the many, that they may be saved" (1 Cor. x. 23ff.).

The other sin the prophet seems to pass over in silence. It is possible, however, that it formed the original burden of the following stanza, with its terrible picture of the doom awaiting Zion:



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“ Therefore Sheol hath enlarged her desire,  
And opened her mouth without measure ;  
And down go her splendour and rabble,  
Her pomp, and all that rejoice therein :  
And lambs shall graze (on her site) as their pasture  
And fatlings shall feed 'mong the ruins.”  
(vv. 14, 17.)

Certainly no sin could provide a more fitting prelude for such a scene of desolation. There is none so utterly degrading to human nature, none that more thoroughly poisons the joy of family affection, pollutes society, and ruins the nation. As the prophet says, Hell opens her mouth to swallow the guilty people. When we reflect on the fate that has overtaken once powerful nations because of indulgence in this sin, the revelations of social vice in our own great cities may well spur us to action. The laws may be on the side of purity, but they are violated on a quite appalling scale. Every one, then, who has at heart the welfare of his people must lend the whole force of his influence to upholding their sanctity, that the powers of evil may be foiled and the victims of their guilty designs redeemed. To this end we must have the Spirit of the Master poured out largely among us. Before the pure flame of His holiness sin flees away abashed, but through the radiance of His love the sinner is drawn to virtue

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and honour. Thus that which is equally the perversion of a natural instinct is restored to its sacred function, and love becomes the lord of life.<sup>1</sup>

4. Indulgence in sin leads to open *defiance of God*.

“ Woe ! they that draw guilt with bullock thongs  
And sin as with cart-ropes,  
That say, ‘ Let Him speed on,  
Hasten His work, that we may see it ;  
Let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel  
Draw nigh and come, that we may know it ! ’ ”  
(vv. 18f.)

The first approaches of sin are full of allurements. It is so pleasant to walk in By-path Meadow, and to drive the chariot of Pleasure through the streets of Vanity Fair ! And, if danger should threaten, it is so simple to retrace one's steps to the straight and narrow way ! But sin that is dallied with soon becomes the master, and the poor soul is yoked to the chariot, and himself driven hither and thither by the whip of his passions. And anon he accepts his fate, makes evil his good, and dashes madly in the face of Providence. “ Let God act—if there be a God ! Let Him show some signs that He rules—then may we believe in Him ! ” Such scepticism is, of course, very different from that

<sup>1</sup> For a fearless exposure of vice in our modern cities, inspired on every page with the love and pity of the Saviour, see Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil*.



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which affected Job when tortured by the problem of Divine government. It is moral, not speculative. It is the wilful challenge of a spirit that has definitely turned from faith and goodness, not the broken cry of one whose face is towards the light, but whose vision is obscured by the cloud that so often veils the presence of God. It is what Jesus described as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—the deliberate quenching of all the higher impulses of the soul—the sin for which there is no forgiveness because there is not even a possibility of repentance. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John iii. 19).

5.—The inevitable result is *moral blindness and perversion*.

“Woe ! they that call evil good,  
And good evil ;  
That put darkness for light,  
And light for darkness ;  
That put bitter for sweet,  
And sweet for bitter ” (ver. 20).

If the instincts of our being are abused, they no longer respond to their natural stimulus. The senses are dulled, and the passions warped ; the taste is vitiated, and the feeling for beauty and truth distorted. In like manner, through headstrong

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persistence in sin, the conscience is "seared as with a hot iron," deadened to the perception of goodness, unable to distinguish right from wrong, so perverted even as to confuse the standards, and call right wrong and wrong right. "To the pure all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus i. 15f.).

There may be few whose personal conscience has fallen so far below the ideal. But often a pure personal conscience is found unequally yoked with a blunted or distorted social conscience. Many a man of high Christian principle and blameless character upheld slavery as part of the Divinely ordered constitution of things, or offered determined resistance to social legislation as an unjust interference with vested rights. In our own day we meet with the same divorce between private and social ethics. Men who are the soul of honour in their personal relations will condone sharp dealings in the market on the plea that "business is business," tolerate the commerce in drunkenness and vice as a necessary concession to human weakness, and even defend child labour, the sweat-shop, underpayment, and other forms of social injustice, as legitimate means of accumulating wealth. But the conscience

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cannot be allowed to rest content with this double standard of right. The laws of God are one and undivided, seamless as the garment of Christ. And the conscience that is "void of offence toward God" must be equally void of offence "toward man." He that loves God with all his heart and soul and mind must love his neighbour as himself. He that walks before God in uprightness and truth must treat his fellows as he would be treated himself. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12).

6.—The outcome of such perversity is flagrant *injustice* in the law-courts.

"Woe ! they that are wise in their own eyes,  
And in their own sight knowing ;  
That acquit the wicked in return for a bribe,  
And the rights of the innocent wrest from him "  
(vv. 21, 23).

The charge of partiality in the courts is among the most frequently levelled by the prophets. For judicial venality and corruption are vices to which the Eastern mind is peculiarly addicted. Our situation is vastly better. Judges may still be swayed by personal prejudices and passions, but at all events they are steel-proof against bribery. Yet the delays and uncertainties of law in the democratic

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West set up a decided inequality between rich and poor. "Justice wields a sword on the poor, but a lath on the rich and influential."<sup>1</sup> And in our political life—the sacred fountain whence justice springs—the balance is often heavily weighted on the side of the rich. In matters affecting the common good the moneyed interests have far more than their rightful influence. Social rank also exerts its power. Even graft—which is but a thinly veiled synonym for bribery—is by no means unknown. With such means of persuasion brought to bear on the judgment of our rulers and lawgivers, we cannot hope to see the life of the people raised to the higher planes for which we work and pray. National prosperity rests on the bedrock of justice, and without that it must crumble into dust.

"Therefore, as tongue of fire devoureth the stubble,  
And hay sinketh down in the flame,  
Their root shall become as rottenness,  
And their blossom shall rise as dust :  
For they have scorned the teaching of the Lord of  
Hosts,  
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel "

(ver. 24).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Ross, *Sin and Society*, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> "Justice, Justice; woe betide us everywhere when, for this reason or for that, we fail to do justice! No beneficence, benevolence, or other virtuous contribution will make good the want. . . . There is but one thing needed for the world; but that one is indispensable. Justice, Justice, in the name of heaven; give us justice, and we live; give us only counterfeits of it, or succedanea for it, and we die."—Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, II. p. 68.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DAY OF JEHOVAH

IN his criticism of the moral and social evils of the time Isaiah has revealed his power of analysis. The characteristic prophecies of the reign of Jotham, however, are those in which he pictures the coming of judgment on Israel. And here the young prophet shows himself already a master of verse, whom Milton alone approaches in splendour, combined with classical restraint and conciseness. The sweep of his imagination is sublime, and the diction is as lordly as the thought. The phrasing is carefully finished, and the texture studded throughout with brilliant figures of speech, while the lines move on with a stately rhythm, strong and full, yet always under command.

As Jerusalem was the centre of Israel's offence, the prophet dwells first on her infidelity and her smelting in the furnace :

“ Ah ! fallen to a harlot  
Is the faithful city—  
Zion, that was full of justice,  
Where righteousness dwelt !



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Thy silver is become dross,  
Thy pure wine mixed ;  
Thy princes are rebels,<sup>1</sup>  
And confederates of thieves ;  
Each of them loveth bribes,  
And pursueth rewards ;  
They judge not the fatherless,  
Nor plead for the widow.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah,  
The Holy One of Israel :  
' Ah ! how I will ease me of mine adversaries,  
And avenge me of mine enemies !  
I will turn my hand upon thee,  
And will kindle fire against thee ;  
I will smelt out thy dross in the furnace,  
And remove all thine alloy.  
Then will I restore thy judges as at first,  
And thy counsellors as at the beginning ;  
And afterward shalt thou be called the Township  
of Justice,  
The Faithful City ' ' (i. 21-26).

But the whole land was full of vanity, and in the most splendid of his early oracles Isaiah describes the breaking of the Day of Jehovah upon the pomp and pride of Israel—the silver and gold, the horses

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne reproduces the play on words by his rendering, "Thy rulers are become unruly ; " Wade by, "Thy princes are unprincipled."

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and chariots, the towers and battlements, the ships of Tarshish, the cedars and oaks and mountains—even all that exalted itself against His glorious majesty.<sup>1</sup>

“Go ye into the caves of the rock,  
And hide yourselves in the holes of the dust,  
From before the terror of Jehovah,  
And before His glorious majesty !  
For Jehovah hath forsaken His people,  
He hath cast off the household of Jacob ;  
For their land is filled with traffickers,  
And hands they strike with the children of aliens ;  
Their land also is filled with silver and gold,  
And there is no end to their treasures ;  
Their land also is filled with horses,  
And there is no end to their chariots ;  
Their land also is filled with idols,  
And there is no end to their images ;  
They worship the work of their hands,  
Even that which their fingers have made.  
So the pride of man shall sink low,  
And the loftiness of man shall be abased ;  
And Jehovah alone shall be exalted,  
While the idols shall one and all vanish.

<sup>1</sup> The conception of the Day of Jehovah is a survival from popular eschatology. According to the traditional belief, the Day was to be one in which Jehovah would come down in battle-array to fight for His people, and lead them to universal and abiding victory. Amos was the first of the prophets to turn this expectation against the people themselves (Amos v. 18ff.). In this he is followed, not only by Isaiah, but also by Zephaniah and Joel (Zeph. i. 14ff. ; Joel i. 15ff.).

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Go ye into the caves of the rock,  
And hide yourselves in the holes of the dust,  
From before the terror of Jehovah,  
And before His glorious majesty !  
For Jehovah of Hosts hath a Day,  
The Lord hath a time for judgment,  
On all that is proud and lofty,  
And on all that is high and uplifted—  
On all the cedars of Lebanon,  
And on all the oaks of Bashan ;  
On all the lofty mountains,  
And on all uplifted hills ;  
On every lordly tower,  
And on every fenced wall ;  
On all the ships of Tarshish,  
And on all the stately galleons.  
So the pride of man shall sink low,  
And the loftiness of man shall be abased ;  
And Jehovah alone shall be exalted,  
While the idols shall one and all vanish ”  
(ii. 6-18).

In launching these bolts of judgment, Isaiah seems almost to have “ shut up his bowels of compassion ” against his brethren. But his heart is full of love for them, and his words at times melt with a tenderness akin to Hosea’s. Thus his picture of the approaching anarchy in Judah is full of genuine pathos :

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“ For behold ! the Lord,  
Jehovah of Hosts,  
Doth remove from Jerusalem and Judah  
Both staff and stay—  
The hero and man of war,  
The judge and prophet and elder,  
The man of renown and the counsellor,  
The skilled in magic and expert in charms.  
And youths will He give for their princes,  
And capricious babes shall rule them ;  
And the people shall wax tyrannous man over man,  
Each man over his neighbour ;  
And rude shall they prove, the youth to the elder,  
And the churl to the noble.

When a man shall lay hold of his fellow,  
In whose father's house is a mantle,<sup>1</sup>  
(Saying) ‘ Come, our chief shalt thou be,  
And this heap of ruins shall be under thy hand,’  
On that day shall he lift up his voice :  
‘ I will not be an healer,  
For in my house there is neither bread nor mantle,—  
Ye shall not make me chief of the people.’  
For Jerusalem hath stumbled,  
And Judah is fallen ;  
For their tongue and their deeds are against the Lord,  
To provoke the eyes of His glory ;

<sup>1</sup> The mantle was the sign of aristocratic dignity (*cf.* Joseph's coat), and therefore was held to entitle its wearer to high office in the kingdom.

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Their respect of persons hath witnessed against them,  
And their sin have they published and hid not.

My people—babes are their tyrants,  
And women rule them ;<sup>1</sup>

My people—thy leaders mislead thee,  
And confuse the way of thy paths.

Woe unto them !

For ill have they done themselves.

Lo ! Jehovah standeth to plead,

Upriseth to judge His people ;

Jehovah doth enter on judgment

With His people's elders and princes :

' It is ye that have eaten the vineyard,

The plunder of the poor is in your houses !

What mean ye that ye crush my people,

And grind the face of the poor ? ' ' " (iii. 1-15).

The most exquisite expression is given to Isaiah's feeling for Judah, however, in his "love-song" of the Vineyard.

" Now let me sing for my loved One  
A love-song touching His vineyard !

My loved One had a vineyard

On a fertile peak ;

And He digged it, and cleared it of stones,

And did plant it with vines.

<sup>1</sup> The prophet here probably alludes to the young prince Ahaz and the Court ladies who surrounded him. The perfect tenses are doubtless prophetic futures.



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He built a tower in the midst of it,  
And hewed out a winevat ;  
And He looked for a yield of grapes,  
But it yielded wildings.

And now, ye inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
And men of Judah—  
Judge for yourselves, I pray,  
Between me and my vineyard !  
What more could be done for my vineyard  
Than that which I did ?  
When I looked, then, for yield of grapes,  
Why yielded it wildings ?

So now let me show you, I pray,  
What I will do with my vineyard :  
I will pluck down its hedge, and it shall be devoured,  
I will break through its walls, and it shall be down-  
trodden ;  
I will make it a waste, unpruned and unhoed,  
That shall spring up with briars and thorns ;  
And the clouds will I command,  
That they rain no rain thereon.

For the vineyard of Jehovah of Hosts is the house  
of Israel,  
And the men of Judah the planting in which He  
delighted ;

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And He looked for (the word of) justice, but  
 behold ! the sword (of injustice),  
 For right, but behold ! the cry of the wronged ”  
 (v. 1-7).

Though the prophet's heart is with Judah, his sovereign eye ranges over the Northland too. He knows the violence, oppression and crime that prevail there, and he feels that doom is near. Thus in the most powerfully dramatic of all his oracles he unrolls the swift march of judgment through cycle after cycle of disaster—invasion, defeat and slaughter, the loss of territory, and the horrors of civil war—till the tragedy reaches its close amid the thunders of the Assyrian conquest :

“ A word hath the Lord sent unto Jacob,  
And it lighteth on Israel ;  
And the people all shall know it,  
Even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—  
Those that have spoken in pride  
And the stoutness of their heart, saying,  
‘ The bricks have fallen, but with hewn stone will  
we build ;  
The sycamores are cut down, but with cedars  
will we replace them ’.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wade renders the play by, "He looked for rule, and behold misrule; for redress, but behold distress."

<sup>2</sup> This couplet is perhaps derived from a popular song of the time. In any case it finely expresses the invincible confidence of the people, even in the hour of defeat and disaster.

## The Faith of Isaiah

Therefore Jehovah doth raise the foeman against  
them,

And spurreth on their enemies,<sup>1</sup>  
Aram (Syria) on the East, and the Philistines behind,  
Devouring Israel with open mouth.  
For all this His anger is not turned back,  
But His hand is stretched out still.

The people return not to Him that smote them,  
And seek not Jehovah of Hosts ;  
So He cutteth from Israel both head and tail,  
Palm-branch and reed in a single day.

. . . . .

. . . . .  
He spareth not their choice young men,  
Nor pitieth their orphans and widows ;  
Because each one is godless and ill-doing,  
And every mouth speaketh folly.  
For all this His anger is not turned back,  
But His hand is stretched out still.

Their wickedness burns like a fire,  
Which consumeth briars and thorns,  
Then kindleth the forest groves,  
And they roll up in pillars of smoke.  
Through the wrath of Jehovah the land is ablaze,  
And the people are food for the flames.  
They carve on the right hand, but are hungry still ;  
They devour on the left, but are not satisfied.

<sup>1</sup> The perfect tenses are here also, most probably, prophetic futures.

## The Day of Jehovah

No man spareth his brother,  
But each devoureth his neighbour's flesh,  
Manasseh Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,  
While together they rise against Judah.  
For all this His anger is not turned back,  
But His hand is stretched out still.

So He raiseth a signal for a nation afar,  
He doth whistle him hither from the end of the  
earth ;  
And lo ! speedily, swiftly he cometh,  
In his ranks none weary or stumbling ;  
No girdle unloosed on his loins,  
No thong for his sandals snapped.  
His arrows are sharpened,  
His bows are all bent ;  
His horses' hoofs are as flint,  
Like the whirlwind his wheels are accounted.  
His roar is as that of a lion,  
Like young lions he roareth and growleth ;  
He seizeth the prey, and sweepeth it off,  
And there is none to deliver " (ix. 8-21 ; v. 26-29).

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH

ISAIAH has thus far confined himself to general application of religious principles ; but the time now comes for him to play a more direct part in public affairs, and therewith to unfold the positive side of holiness.

The last ten years had seen decisive changes in the history of the nations round Judah. Jeroboam of Israel died in peace about 743 B.C., but hardly had his son Zechariah assumed the reins than the forces of disorder broke loose, and the country was plunged into a very maelstrom of trouble. Within six months the king himself had fallen beneath the assassin's sword, and the line of Jehu came to an inglorious end. The usurper Shallum held sway for one brief month, when he too perished in a counter-insurrection led by Menahem, a rude soldier, who carved his way to the throne by ferocious cruelties. He reigned for some six years (743-737), and was succeeded by his son Pekahiah. In little over a year, however, the commander-in-chief, Pekah, son of Remaliah, headed another conspiracy, slew the king in his palace, and usurped the power



## The Challenge of Faith

(735). Pekah was a man of restless ambition, a born intriguer, who lived in an atmosphere of plotting and deceit. In these respects he found his match in Rezin,<sup>1</sup> king of Damascus. To defend itself against the aggression of two such masters of craft, Judah needed all its resources of wisdom and strength, especially as its once irresistible neighbour, Egypt, had sunk to a position of virtual impotence. The dynasty of Shishak perished ingloriously about 745 B.C., and under the following dynasty (the Twenty-Third) things went from bad to worse, "until there was at last an independent lord or petty king in every city of the Delta and up the river as far as Hermopolis."<sup>2</sup> Meantime, Assyria had begun to loom once more ominously on the Eastern horizon. For half a century it had been locked in deadly struggle with the freedom-loving peoples of Armenia; but with the accession of the usurping Pul, better known by his official title of Tiglath-Pileser IV., in 745, its energies were liberated for a renewed career of conquest. Pul was a soldier of genius, with clear-cut aims and a policy of Thorough. His first efforts were naturally directed to the pacification of Armenia and the East, but as early as 742 he was ready for his advance towards the Mediterranean. In three hot campaigns he besieged and stormed the citadel of Arpad, a key-position

<sup>1</sup> More accurately, *Razon* (Assyrian *Ra-sun-nu*).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, p. 536.

## The Faith of Isaiah

some fifty miles inland from Antioch, and in 738 defeated a strong coalition of North-Phœnician states under Azariah of Ja'udi, in the Amanus region, extending his conquests southward to Kullani (the Biblical Calno) and Hamath, in the valley of the Orontes. Thus the door lay open for a further advance through Damascus to Palestine and Egypt.

Rezin had been among the first after the downfall of Arpad to acknowledge Tiglath-Pileser's suzerainty, and in 738 Menahem of Israel purchased a precarious independence at the cost of a heavy tribute of silver (2 Kings xv. 19f.). Taking advantage, however, of renewed disturbances in Armenia, Rezin conspired with Pekah to raise the standard of revolt against Assyria. If a strong resistance were to be offered, it was necessary that Judah should be brought into line. Jotham refused to entertain the proposal; and the allied kings bent their immediate energies to his humiliation. Ere the blow could be struck, Jotham died, leaving the government in the hands of his vain, frivolous and irresolute son, Ahaz, then barely twenty-one years old (735 B.C.). The weakness of the new reign became evident from the first. Edomite bands swooped down on Elath, the seaport which Uzziah had taken and fortified, thus destroying the maritime power of Judah at a single blow. The enemy was quick to press his advantage. Syrian troops were thrown into Israel, and arms joined for a frontal

## The Challenge of Faith

attack on Jerusalem. The capital won by storm, Ahaz was to be replaced by a creature of Rezin's—the nameless “son of Tabeal”<sup>1</sup>—and Judah made tributary to the allies. Ahaz was no man to face an emergency like this. When he heard the dismal news of the Syrian advance, “his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved before the wind.” He made a brave appearance, indeed, of inspecting the defences of Jerusalem, as though he meant to hold out to the last; but in his own mind he had already planned to shirk the path of duty, and had in fact sent a secret embassy to Tiglath-Pileser, praying him to come and save him, cravenly signing himself, “Thy servant and thy son” (2 Kings xvi. 7.).

To Ahaz this step no doubt seemed a master-stroke of wisdom. He had allied himself with the mightiest Empire of the age, and thus sealed the fate of his enemies. But the price was the freedom of his country and the purity of its faith. Thus Isaiah stood out in fearless opposition. Taking his young son Shear-jashub with him, at Jehovah's suggestion, he met the king at “the end of the conduit from the upper reservoir,” the most critical point in the defences of Jerusalem, and apparently the very spot whence Sennacherib's generalissimo was to hurl his insults against the people of Jehovah,

<sup>1</sup> Or, rather, *Tab'el*, “good is God,” exactly equivalent to the *Tab-rimmon*, “good is Rimmon,” of 1 Kings xv. 18.

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some thirty years later. Looking him straight in the eye, he bade him away with his foolish fears. "Take heed, and keep quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, for these two stumps of smoking firebrands!" They seem now full of fire and fury, as they hiss out their rage against Jerusalem. But thus saith Jehovah, "Their counsel shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass;" for behind them is nothing but upstart vanity.

"The head of Syria is Damascus,  
And the head of Damascus is Rezin;<sup>1</sup>  
And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,  
And the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah!"

On the other hand,

"The head of Judah is Jerusalem,  
And the head of Jerusalem is Jehovah of Hosts.<sup>2</sup>

If Ahaz and his people will only put their trust in Him, they shall never be brought to confusion. But

"If ye will not believe,  
Ye shall not be established" (vii. 8ff.).<sup>3</sup>

In this heroic sentence we have faith for the first

<sup>1</sup> The intervening clause is an evident gloss, applying the prophet's warning to the colonisation of Samaria by Esar-haddon (c. 670 B.C.).

<sup>2</sup> This couplet does not appear in the text, and may never have been spoken; but it expresses what was undoubtedly in Isaiah's mind.

<sup>3</sup> The play of words in the original is finely brought out in G. A. Smith's paraphrase, "If ye have not faith, ye cannot have staith." With this may be compared Luther's rendering, "Gläubet ihr nicht, so bleibet ihr nicht;" Wade's, "If ye will not confide, ye shall not abide;" and McFadyen's, "No faith, no fixity."



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time set forth as the staying principle of life. God is the King Eternal and Almighty ; therefore the people that holds by Him becomes partner in His might, and is more than a match for every hostile power, while those who place reliance on their own selfish and wayward policies must come to naught. Isaiah meant not to condemn such reasonable plans of defence as Ahaz was apparently busied with—for faith is in perfect harmony with a sound mind. What he despised as so utterly unworthy of a child of faith was the foolish panic to which Ahaz had given way, and the equally foolish, and far more fatal, surrender of himself and his country to the Assyrians. To the enlightened understanding of the prophet faith was the living fountain of manly courage and strength, unbelief was alike the deepest folly and the most contemptible weakness.

A distinguished German scholar has asserted that “ a politician of our days would regard Isaiah’s advice as altogether impractical and even absurd.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly, the politician reared on the Bismarckian doctrine that Might is Right—with its corollaries that “ the renunciation of its own power is for the State in the most real sense the sin against the Holy Ghost,” and that therefore “ the highest moral duty of the State is to safeguard its power ” by whatsoever means<sup>2</sup>—must regard such advice as

<sup>1</sup> Guthe, *Jesaja*, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Treitschke, *Selections from Lectures on Politics*, pp. 14, 31.



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absurd and even immoral. On his theory, indeed, a weak nation like Israel has no right to assert its independence, hardly even to live. "It is manifest that, if the State is power, it is only the State that is really powerful that corresponds to our idea. Hence the undoubted ludicrousness that lies in the nature of a small State."<sup>1</sup> But God has, not once nor twice, "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are strong"—to prove to them, by tokens that cannot be gainsaid, that Right is the only Might. When the stout burghers of Holland threw down the gauntlet against Philip, they had no strength but faith in God and country; but through faith they triumphed, and carried the banner of Freedom to far-distant shores. By the same faith the Invincible Armada was scattered to the four winds of heaven, and Honour and Chivalry were established as the rules of the sea. The Parliamentary "serving-men and tapsters" were driven like chaff before the fierce charges of "the gentlemen of England"; but when Cromwell gathered round him the Ironsides—"such men as had the fear of God before them, as made conscience of what they did"—he could truthfully maintain, "from that day forward they were never beaten, and wherever they were engaged against the enemy, they beat continually."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, IV. p. 21.

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Garibaldi's redshirts were a mere speck in the ocean, but their bayonets had "ideas at their points,"<sup>1</sup> and through the explosive force of these ideas they dissolved the Austrian power, and made Italy a nation. The teaching of the centuries has been burned into the conscience of our modern world with letters of fire. When Germany launched her disciplined hosts on an astonished Europe, there seemed no force able to stay them. Again and again the issues trembled in the balance. But the moral strength which comes from faith in God and a righteous cause has proved mightier than the mightiest, and now he that runs may read that God reigns in righteousness, and that those alone who "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" shall live.<sup>2</sup>

It is no other in our struggles with moral and social evil. When Mazzini embarked on his great campaign for Humanity, his only support was a dauntless faith in God and the Future,<sup>3</sup> but through

<sup>1</sup> "Bayonets are truly powerful only when they assert or maintain a right."  
"We will only use bayonets on the condition that they have ideas at their points."  
—*Life and Writings of Mazzini*, I. pp. 118, 180.

<sup>2</sup> It is hopeful to see the dawning of this truth in the German mind. Dr. Mühlton writes as follows: "If we want to restore to mankind its most essential basis—which is mutual confidence—we must, above all things, combat the idea that there may be a different morality for different individuals or for different human institutions. . . . You cannot appeal to the sense of justice of the people when you ask it to defend the unrighteous conduct of the State" (*Diary*, pp. 184f.).

<sup>3</sup> His *Faith and the Future* ends with the prophetic words: "Lift up thy countenance to the sun of God, thou child of humanity, and read that legend in the heavens: *it moves*. Faith and action. The future is ours" (*Life and Writings*, III. p. 144).

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that faith he opened the door of hope for the distressed in every land. Lincoln was upheld by the same unwavering trust. When asked whether he felt assured that the Lord was on his side, he bravely answered : “ I am not at all concerned about that ; for I know that the Lord is *always* on the side of the *right*. But it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord’s side.”<sup>1</sup> The social crusader is cheered onward in his work of redemption by the vision of the city “ which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And in the Holy War against personal temptation and sin, the soldier of Jesus Christ is sustained by the conviction that He who “ was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin,” is at every crisis of the battle “ able to succour them that are tempted.”

Our faith also is consonant with wisdom and reason. As Isaiah was vitally interested in seeing the walls and waterworks of Jerusalem in order, so the good soldier of our day will “ trust God and keep his powder dry,” and the faithful nation trust God and look well to its ships, munitions and food stores. The Christian statesman and reformer will

<sup>1</sup> Compare his noble Farewell Address at Springfield on his acceptance of the Presidential Nomination : “ I now leave, not knowing when or whether I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”—*Speeches and Letters* (Everyman Library), p. 156.

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keep his eyes open to the heavenly vision, yet like Nehemiah will toil patiently, sword and trowel in hand, warding off the attacks of the enemy with soldierly courage and resolution, while laying stone to stone, "without haste and without rest," using all the resources of law and public opinion for the realisation of his dreams.<sup>1</sup> And he who is diligently working out his own salvation will accept the various vicissitudes of life—its triumphs and adversities, its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears and doubts—as means to this end. All things are ours; and the God of our salvation makes all to "work together for good to them that love Him."

The prophet's faith was not exhausted in his bold statement of principle. He was prepared to submit it to whatsoever test Ahaz might impose. "Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; make it deep

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith has cited the example of General Gordon in his handling of the slave traffic, contrasting his coolness, sanity of judgment, and "sensible advice," with the "haste and rash proposals of philanthropists at home," attributing these high qualities to his conviction "that the slave trade, like everything else in the world, is in the hands of God, and so may be calmly studied and wisely checkmated" (*The Book of Isaiah*, I. p. 109, n. 2). Among other remarkable instances of faith combined with sound practical reason we may note Mazzini in his direction of the Roman Republic, acting with his associates "like men who have the enemy at their gates, and at the same time like men who are working for eternity," and by sheer good sense transforming his Utopia, as even Carlyle admitted, "into a patent and potent reality" (*Life and Writings*, I. p. 197; Bolton King, *The Life of Mazzini*, pp. 87f., 132ff.), and the good Lord Shaftesbury, labouring at his schemes for social betterment, faced with opposition that might well have daunted the boldest, defeated year after year, yet steadily building up his case, making it his invariable rule "to see everything with my own eyes, to take nothing on trust or hearsay," pleading in season and out of season, and at last seeing one proposal after another embodied in Acts of Parliament, and both political parties in Great Britain fully converted to his view (Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury*, *passim*).



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as Sheol or high as heaven," and He will answer. And when the fickle king trifled with his great assurance—fearful of offending the Lord God of Israel, yet anxious that nothing should interfere with his perverse plans—Jehovah Himself gave him a sign. "Behold, a young woman is with child and about to bear a son, and she shall call his name Immanuel. For before the child shall have learned to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings thou tremblest shall be made desolate" (vii. 14, 16).

Endless controversy has centred round the sign of Immanuel. In early Christian tradition it was taken as a direct prophecy of the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The word '*almah*', however, does not mean "virgin," but simply a young woman of marriageable age. Moreover, the sign was clearly intended, not for a generation 700 years removed from Isaiah, but for the prophet's own contemporaries. On a frank recognition of this fact the Messianic character of the sign has recently been defended by the theory that the prophet was alluding to an ancient prophecy of a coming Deliverer, the immediate fulfilment of which he boldly announces to Ahaz.<sup>1</sup> The theory is attractive, and

<sup>1</sup> "We must suppose that there was current in the time of Isaiah a well-known prophecy of the birth of a wonderful child who was destined to bear the name Immanuel, and in his childhood to eat milk and honey (the food of Paradise), and before he shall have learned to distinguish between good and evil, *i.e.*, before he is five years old, to become the deliverer of his people, or the bringer of good fortune. The wonder which Isaiah proposes to Ahaz consists in this, that he



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has already won considerable vogue among scholars. It rests, however, on too many unproved assumptions to be relied on with any confidence. The proposals to identify the mother with the wife of Isaiah, one of Ahaz' queens, or the Jewish community as a whole, and the child with an elsewhere unknown son of Isaiah, the future king Hezekiah, or some other prince of the royal line, seem equally precarious. It may be questioned, indeed, whether the prophet had any particular child in view. As we read the text, at all events, the emphasis lies, not on the personality of either mother or child, but on the name Immanuel, as the expression of Jehovah's purpose for His people. It is safer, then, to confine the significance of the sign to this. A child to be born of some Jewish mother within the next few months will receive the name Immanuel, *God is with us*, as a living symbol of the deliverance which Jehovah will thus early have effected, while by the time the child is able to distinguish the pleasant from the harmful—that is, in two to three years—the land of Syria and Northern Israel will have been laid waste, and Judah set wholly free from their menace.<sup>1</sup>

announces the fulfilment of this prophecy as a present reality. 'The woman whom thou knowest of, O king, is already with child, and after an interval the Deliverer Immanuel shall be born, as the old oracle promises!' On such a view the tremendous faith and splendid courage of Isaiah stand out clearly before us. He boldly enunciates as actual fact and present reality what for the rest of his people lies in an unknown future."—Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-juedischen Eschatologie*, pp. 276f.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. S. Peake's illuminating article on "Immanuel" in the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, I. pp. 782f.

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The sign of Immanuel was for the king. But, to impress his hope on the imagination of the people as well, Isaiah took a large tablet, or advertisement board, on which he wrote in common, legible characters, *L'maher-shalal Hash-baz*, "The sign of Swift-spoil, Speedy-prey," and set it up on some conspicuous position in the city, explaining the force of the words to two responsible witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah (viii. 1f.). To a child born in his own house about a year afterwards he likewise gave the name of Maher-shalal Hash-baz, as a pledge that "before the child shall have learned to call *Abi*, *Immi* (*Dada*, *Mama*)"—in other words, within a year or so—"the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria" (viii. 3f.).

To the coming doom of Syria and Ephraim the prophet devotes one of the most brilliant of his oracles, which must be assigned to the same critical period as the signs.

"Lo ! Damascus is removed from being a city,  
And shall become a ruin abandoned for ever ;  
Her cities shall flocks possess—

They shall lie down, and none shall affray them.  
The fortress shall pass from Ephraim,  
And the kingdom from Damascus ;

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The remnant also of Syria shall perish,  
They shall be like the glory of the children of Israel.  
The Rede of Jehovah of Hosts !

On that day shall the glory of Jacob be minished,  
And the fat of his flesh shall be lean :  
It shall be as when reaper gathereth the crops,  
And his arm reaps off the ears,  
Or when gardener beateth an olive-tree,  
And a gleaning is left thereon—  
Two or three berries on the uppermost bough,  
Four or five on the branches.  
The Rede of Jehovah of Hosts !

Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy  
salvation,  
And hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy  
strength—  
Though thou plantest thy plantings of Adonis,  
And settest in vineyards of an alien god,  
And as soon as thou plantest thou makest them grow,  
And by morning dost bring thy seedlings to  
blossom—  
Yet the harvest shall fail on the day of thy sickness,  
And of pain that cannot be cured.  
The Rede of Jehovah of Hosts ! ”

(xvii. I-II).

King and people still refused to listen, preferring  
to trust in their arm of flesh, the ruthless might of

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Assyria. The more earnestly the prophet pleaded with them, the more obtuse became their understanding, the duller their ears, and the more "besmeared" their eyes. They heard, but could not understand; they saw, but perceived not (vi. 9f.). With this dullness of spiritual vision went a strange recrudescence of superstition. On every hand the people scented plots and conspiracies (viii. 12); and having lost all real faith in God, they betook themselves to wizards and other mediums, that "inquired of the dead on behalf of the living" (viii. 19). So strong was the current that the prophet himself found it hard to resist, and was at times almost borne off his feet. But the fear of Jehovah sustained him (viii. 11ff.), and through all the perplexities of the hour he held fast by the word of revelation—"the teaching and the testimony" that Jehovah had entrusted to him (viii. 19f.)—continuing to bear silent witness to the hope he cherished by the names of himself and his children—Isaiah, *Jehovah is salvation*, Shear-jashub, *A remnant shall return*, or *shall be converted* (possibly *shall remain*), and Maher-shalal Hash-baz, *Swift-spoil Speedy-prey*—all of them "signs and portents" of the salvation Jehovah was soon to work out for Judah (viii. 18).

Isaiah's real influence, however, by no means waned during this period of anxiety. There had gathered round him a small circle of earnest souls



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—his “learners” or disciples—whom he could instruct more perfectly in the knowledge of Jehovah. And among them he “bound” his testimony, and “sealed” his teaching, while he himself waited patiently for Jehovah to reveal His purpose in season (viii. 16f.).<sup>1</sup> In making this distinction between the general mass of the people and an elect company of disciples Isaiah took another decisive step forward—one prophetic of the essential freedom of the sons of God. “Till then no one had dreamed of a fellowship of faith dissociated from all national forms, maintained without the exercise of ritual services, bound together by faith in the Divine word alone. It was the birth of a new era in the Old Testament religion, for it was the birth of the conception of the *Church*, the first step in the emancipation of spiritual religion from the forms of political life—a step not less significant that all its consequences were not seen till centuries had passed away. The community of true religion and the political community of Israel had never before been separated even in thought; now they stood side by side, conscious of their mutual antagonism, and never again fully to fall back into their old identity.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The absolute infinitives are doubtless to be read as emphatic futures: “I will bind up the testimony and seal the teaching with my disciples” (probably in the spiritual sense, *i.e.*, “in the heart of my disciples”), etc.

<sup>2</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 274f.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE SCOURGE OF GOD

ISAIAH's meeting with Ahaz must have taken place towards the close of 735 B.C. Within a year the hosts of Tiglath-Pileser had swept over the land of Gilead, Asher, Zebulon and Naphtali, ravaging and depopulating, bringing "distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish" and despair. Samaria itself was spared for a season, but the shadow of ignominious death never again rose from its brows. The punishment of Damascus was more summary. The Assyrian monuments allude to a pitched battle, in which Rezin was severely defeated, and from which he "fled alone for safety, and crept secretly like a mouse into the gates of his city." This was followed by the two years' siege of Damascus, ending with the sack of the city, the execution of Rezin, and the deportation of the people to Kir (732). Thus, about the time when the child Immanuel had learned the rudiments of discretion, and Maher-shalal Hash-baz was beginning to prattle *Abi, Immi*, "the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria were carried away before the king of Assyria."

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Had Ahaz listened to Isaiah's advice, and kept himself free from entangling alliances, the Assyrian flood would doubtless have receded as swiftly as it came. But because he had despised the gracious influences that centred round the gentle waters of Shiloah—the influences of simple faith and piety—Jehovah would bring upon him and his people “days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah” (vii. 17). In a series of vivid images the prophet conjures up the terror and desolation that must soon overtake Judah at the hands of the king of Assyria.

“On that day Jehovah will whistle for the fly and the bee,<sup>1</sup>

And they shall come and settle down, all of them,  
In the rugged valleys and the clefts of the rock,  
And on all the thorn-bushes and all the pastures”  
(vii. 18f.).

“On that day will Jehovah shave bare,  
With a razor hired from beyond the river,<sup>2</sup>  
The head and the hair of the secret parts—  
And also the beard will He sweep away” (vii. 20).

“And on that day shall a man keep alive  
But one young cow and a couple of sheep ;

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the devastating armies of the Assyrians, not also the Egyptians, as the gloss in ver. 18 would indicate.

<sup>2</sup> The “razor” is rightly identified in the gloss with Tiglath-Pileser.

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And in place of abundance of milk they shall eat  
thick curds,  
Even all that are left in the midst of the land ”  
(vii. 21f.).

“ And on that day each place where grew a thousand  
vines,  
At a thousand silver shekels, shall run to thorns  
and briars ;  
With arrows and bow shall one go thither,  
For all the land shall be thorns and briars.

And all the hills that were hoed with the hoe—  
Thither thou mayest not go for fear of thorns  
and briars ;  
But these shall be for the sending of oxen,  
And the treading of sheep ” (vii. 23-25).

“ Seeing this people have rejected  
The waters of Shiloah that gently flow,  
Behold ! then Jehovah doth bring up against them  
The waters of the river mighty and full.

And it shall rise over all its channels,  
And shall pass over all its banks ;  
And on to Judah shall it sweep and o’erflow,  
Even to the neck shall it reach ” (viii. 6-8).

An omen of the doom foreboded by the prophet  
soon appeared. Just after the fall of Damascus,

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Ahaz went there to pay his homage to Tiglath-Pileser. Seeing the altar on which the Great King offered sacrifice to his gods, he drew a plan of it—apparently with his own hands—and sent a copy to Uriah the priest, with instructions to have an exact replica made and placed in the Temple against his return ; and on this he burnt sacrifices, and poured out libations of blood and wine, as he had seen his overlord do in Damascus (2 Kings xvi. 10ff.). This may seem a trivial thing in itself, but it marks the opening of the sluice-gates to the tide of Assyrian influence in religion and morals that was to reach so dangerous a height under Manasseh ; and once the springs of faith were thus drenched with heathen impurities, it would not be long ere the nation itself was engulfed. For moral law is as inexorable in its working as physical. “He that sows the wind must reap the whirlwind ” (Hos. viii. 7).

We have seen a colossal illustration of this principle in our own day. A nation once honoured as the mother of civil and religious freedom, the inspiring genius of science and art, philosophy and faith, allows itself to be seduced by the lust of military glory, and little by little the demon of destruction throws its deadly tentacles about the heart, till at first a moral rot spreads through the body politic, and in due time the nation is left the helpless prey of its enemies. But the same thing is going on continually in our midst. Let a man become

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entangled with evil influences, and like Lot he will be drawn ever more closely within their grip; thus insensibly his own spiritual defences will be sapped, and in the day of crisis ruin will fall both on himself and on those he loves.

The tragedy of Northern Israel came to a speedy close. The invasion of Tiglath-Pileser was followed by the conspiracy of Hoshea, son of Elah, who slew Pekah, and reigned in his stead. For some years he quietly curried favour with the Assyrian king by the payment of regular tribute. In heart, however, he had all along been restive under the yoke, and only looked for a favourable chance of throwing it off. The opportunity came with Tiglath-Pileser's death in 727. His successor, Shalmaneser V., had his hands full of troubles in the East, and "So, king of Egypt"<sup>1</sup> was already fomenting rebellion among the petty states of Syria. Hoshea lent himself an easy handle to these designs. Negotiations were opened, and at the fitting moment the tribute was withheld, and Israel thus definitely committed to rebellion. The result was inevitable. As early as 724 Samaria was invested by Assyrian armies, under the direct command of Shalmaneser. The siege was prolonged over three terrible years, the Samaritans defending themselves with consummate skill

<sup>1</sup> On the cuneiform inscriptions So's name appears as Sewe or Sibi, "who was either an otherwise unknown Delta dynast or ruler of Musri," the North Arabian kingdom which is so often confused with Mizraim=Egypt (Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, p. 549).



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and bravery. Shalmaneser died while the siege was still in progress ; but in the first year of his successor Sargon II. (722-21) the city was taken by storm, its entire population carried off to Assyria, and a new race of mongrel "Samaritans" planted in their stead—a thorn in the side of the pure stock of Abraham for centuries to come.

Isaiah followed this awful march of events with eyes lit up by no hope and but little sympathy. The cup of Israel's pride was filled to overflowing, and the only possible issue was death. Thus in an elegy whose very splendour of colouring is that of the "fading flower" of Samaria's beauty he contemplates the end.

"Woe! the proud crown of the drunkards of  
Ephraim,

And the fading flower of his glorious beauty,  
That rests on the head of the valley of oil!"

Behold! the Lord hath a mighty and strong one,  
Like tempest of hail or storm of destruction,  
That smiteth men down to the earth with violence.<sup>2</sup>

Underfoot shall be trod the proud crown of the  
drunkards of Ephraim,  
And the fading flower of his glorious beauty,  
That rests on the head of the valley of oil.

<sup>1</sup> On the wonderful beauty of Samaria, on its conical hill perched above the rich "valley of oil," cf. Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 240ff.; G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 346ff.

<sup>2</sup> The reference, of course, is to the Assyrians.

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It shall be like the first ripe fig before summer,  
That when one doth but see he plucketh,  
And while yet in his hand doth eat " (xxviii. 1-4).

But for his own people of Judah the prophet has little more hope. They too are eaten up with sensuality and vain-glory. They stagger and reel under drink, they trample justice to the ground, yet they fondly imagine that their "covenant with death"—their foolish trust in their own degrading superstitions—will save them from destruction. Isaiah's reiterated warnings they deride as the stuttering talk of a mere teacher of babes—an idle jargon of meaningless words. With such besotted minds, the prophet feels, no other teaching is possible than continued drilling in the elements of knowledge—the A B C of faith and morals—but the drilling must now come from a ruder teacher than he, even "the gibbering lips and foreign tongue" of the Assyrian conqueror, under whose ruthless blows they will stagger and stumble, "be broken and snared and taken."<sup>1</sup>

"These also stagger with wine, and reel under drink,  
Prophet and priest are confused with wine ;

<sup>1</sup> The prophecy against Samaria ends with ver. 4. The immediate sequel (vv. 5f.) is a "Messianic pendant" (Skinner, I. p. 221), while vv. 7-22 are directed against Judah. The prophecy is usually dated about the beginning of the Egyptian alliance (714-13); but the general description, both of the sin and its punishment, argues for the earlier period (cf. G. A. Smith, *Book of Isaiah*, I. p. 149f.).

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They stagger amid their visions, they stumble in  
judgment,

All their tables are full of vomit, and filth is in  
every place.

‘ And whom would he teach his knowledge ? To  
whom explain his message ?

Is it babes just weaned from the milk, and drawn  
from the breast ?

That (he harpeth on) law by law, law by law, saw  
by saw, saw by saw,

A little here, and a little there ! ’<sup>1</sup>

Therefore by gibbering lips, and a foreign tongue,  
Will He speak to this people, even He that said  
to them :

‘ This is the rest ye shall give to the weary,  
This the refreshing ’—but they would not hear !

So the word of Jehovah shall be unto them law by  
law, law by law, saw by saw, saw by saw,

A little here, and a little there,

That on they may go, and stumble backward,  
And be broken and snared and taken.”

It is but a counsel of despair for them to imagine  
that their “ covenant with death ” will save them  
from Sheol. Jehovah has laid in Zion the corner-

<sup>1</sup> In this stanza we have the people’s indignant protest against Isaiah’s  
“ childish ” teaching. I have followed Whitehouse in his rendering of the puns.

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stone of His Kingdom, the plummet of which is Righteousness ; and faith in Him is the only ground of security.

“ Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful  
men,

Ye rulers of this people which be in Jerusalem !

Because ye say, ‘ We have struck a covenant with  
death,

And with Sheol have made a compact ;

So the scourging scourge, when it cometh, shall  
reach us not,

For lies have we made our refuge, and under falsehood have hidden.’<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah :

‘ Behold ! I lay in Zion a stone that is tried,  
A precious foundation-stone : He that believeth  
shall not be moved ;

And justice will I make the line, and righteousness  
the plummet.’

But hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,

And the waters shall overflow the hiding-place ;  
And your covenant with death shall be cancelled,  
And your compact with Sheol shall stand not.

<sup>1</sup> The people did not, of course, regard their deliberate policy as “ lies ” and “ falsehood.” Isaiah is paraphrasing their words from the point of view of his own ethical insight.

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When the scourging scourge doth come, ye shall be  
beaten down thereby :

As oft as it cometh, it shall catch you up ;  
Yea, morning by morning shall it pass, both day and  
night,

And pure terror shall it be to explain the message.

For too short is the bed to stretch oneself in,  
And too narrow the coverlet to wrap oneself in ;  
For Jehovah shall rise as on Mount Perazim,  
He shall stir up His wrath as in the valley of  
Gibeon ;<sup>1</sup>

To do His deed—so strange His deed !—

And to work His work—so alien His work !—<sup>2</sup>  
So then be not scornful, lest your bands be made  
strong,

For a decree of destruction, a fixed one, have I  
heard from Jehovah of Hosts ”

(xxviii. 7-22).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The allusions here are to David's victories over the Philistines in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem (*cf.* 2 Sam. v. 20f., 25). It is possible that “more vivid traditions” about these victories “may have existed in Isaiah's time” (Skinner, I. p. 227).

<sup>2</sup> The strangeness of Jehovah's work consisted in His fighting, no more on the side of His people, but against them.

<sup>3</sup> It is this prophecy, especially vv. 5-15, which Cromwell commends to the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland (1650), when they attempt to impose their covenant with Charles II. and their procrustean Confession on the Kingdom as a whole. “I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken. Precept may be upon precept, line may be upon line, and yet the Word of the Lord may be to some a word of Judgment, that they may fall backward, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken ! There may be a spiritual fulness, which the world may call drunkenness, as in the second chapter of the



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But destruction is not the end. Jehovah pulls down only to raise a better building ; He ploughs only to sow and reap. And, like a wise husbandman, He varies His methods according to the nature of the harvest in view.

“ Give ear, and hear my voice ;  
Hearken, and hear my speech !  
Doth the ploughman for ever plough,  
Doth he always open and harrow his ground ?  
But rather, when he hath levelled the face thereof,  
Doth he not scatter the vetch and sow the cummin,  
And plant wheat and barley, with spelt as its border ?  
For his God doth instruct and teach him aright.

Then the vetch is not threshed with a sled,  
Nor the wagon-wheel turned on the cummin ;  
But the vetch with a rod is beaten,  
And the cummin with a staff.  
Even the corn is not crushed, for he thresheth it not  
continually,

Acts. There may be, as well, a carnal confidence upon misunderstood and mis-applied precepts, which may be called spiritual drunkenness. There may be a Covenant made with Death and Hell ! I will not say yours was so. But judge if such things have a politic aim : To avoid the overflowing scourge ; or, To accomplish worldly interests ? And if therein you have confederated with wicked and carnal men, and have respect for them, or otherwise have drawn them in to associate with us, Whether this be a covenant of God and spiritual ? Bethink yourselves ; we hope we do. I pray you read the Twenty-eighth of Isaiah, from the fifth to the fifteenth verse. And do not scorn to know that it is the Spirit that quickens and giveth life. The Lord give you and us understanding to do that which is well-pleasing in His sight. Committing you to the grace of God, I rest, Your humble servant, Oliver Cromwell.”—*Letters and Speeches*, II. p. 187.

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But rolleth his wagon-wheel over it, to scatter,  
but not to crush.<sup>1</sup>

This also cometh from Jehovah of Hosts,  
Who is wondrous in counsel and great in wisdom ”  
(vv. 23-29).

Since Isaiah uttered this oracle, the scourge has time and again descended upon the world. Fire has swept through its cities, and pestilence made havoc of its homes. Earthquake has laid waste its fairest provinces, and war deluged its fields with blood. To many minds these visitations are the very negation of Providence. Yet the scourge has its place in the Divine discipline of mankind. Fire and earthquake test our works, “ of what sort they are.” Clearing away the wood and hay and stubble, they teach us to build on more enduring lines. Pestilence also proves the quality of our civic life. Where the masses are herded together in fetid slums, it stalks like “ the terror by night,” taking toll both of rich and poor. But where wholesome conditions prevail, it becomes weak as a bloodless ghost. The scourge of pestilence thus impresses upon us the great lessons of public health, the vital importance

<sup>1</sup> In this stanza the prophet alludes to various methods of threshing. The “ sled ” was a heavy wooden floor, studded on its under-side with iron spikes or stones (*cf.* the Latin *tribulum*), and the “ wagon ” a cart-like frame, thickly set with sharp-edged wheels or rollers, both being dragged over the grain by cattle. The “ rod ” or “ staff ” was an instrument like our flail, worked by hand. The rougher methods were used only with the coarser grains, and even so not to crush but to winnow.

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of flooding our crowded cities with fresh air, pure water, and effective sanitation, and the supreme necessity of providing homes in which the humblest of the people can maintain a virtuous, rich, and satisfying existence. War is no less truly “a dreadful medicine for the human race,”<sup>1</sup> a medicine which purges civilisation of its noxious humours, and hence enables the life-blood of society to flow along healthier channels. Through the great wars of independence the nations have won their civil freedom, and through the battles for Christ’s Crown and Covenant their spiritual freedom. Through the agonies of civil war America shook herself free from the virus of slavery and emerged into social freedom. The long-drawn struggle with Napoleon saw the birth of modern democracy. And in the last terrible war democracy received its baptism of fire. The war has indeed proved a great moral test, piercing to the bed-rock of our civilisation, sweeping away all our “refuges of lies”—the shams and hypocrisies that had so deeply infected Church and politics, society and personal life—and laying bare the fundamental realities—the principles of *freedom, justice, truth* and *brotherhood*, that are the bases of Christian democracy and the only hope for the future of the race. A civilisation rebuilt on the old lines of selfish greed, suspicion, and distrust will inevitably perish. But if we raise our new

<sup>1</sup> Treitschke, *Selections*, p. 25.

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Temple of Humanity on the abiding ground of faith and honour, with freedom, justice, truth and brotherhood as the four-square foundation of the building, the floods may come and the winds beat upon that house, and it shall not fall, "for it was founded upon a rock."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH

THE warnings of Isaiah seemed for the moment to be groundless. Within a few months of the downfall of Samaria the conqueror was himself defeated by Humbanigash, king of Elam, at the battle of Dur-ilu in North Babylonia. Meanwhile, Merodach-Baladan, the ambitious king of Chaldea, had made himself master of Babylon, which he established as the capital of a new Babylonian Empire. Joining hands with Humbanigash, he overran the southern provinces of Assyria, inflicting heavy losses on the inhabitants. Immediately the smouldering embers of disaffection in the West burst into flame. Hamath, Arpad, Damascus, Samaria and Philistia rose in revolt, supported by the irrepressible Sibi of Egypt. The omens were favourable for success, and envoys from Philistia urged Ahaz to throw in his lot with the allies. But Isaiah once more stood out in opposition. Addressing himself first to the exultant Philistines, he bade them cease from their untimely mirth, for they were only courting a worse fate than before.



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“ Rejoice not, Philistia, all of thee,  
Because the rod that smote thee is broken ;  
For out of the serpent's root there cometh an asp,  
And his fruit shall be a flying seraph ” (xiv. 29).<sup>1</sup>

Then, turning to his own people, he counselled them to trust Jehovah, and rest at peace in the city where He had laid the sure foundation-stone.

“ What answer shall be given  
To the messengers of the Gentile ?  
That Jehovah hath founded Zion,  
And in her shall the afflicted of His people find  
refuge ” (ver. 32).

The prophet's sage counsel was signally vindicated. In 720 B.C. Sargon marched westward, met Ilubi'id, king of Hamath, on the historic battlefield of Karkar, crushed him at a blow, flayed him alive as a deterrent to his associates, struck along the Phœnician coast, defeated and captured Hanun, king of Gath, the head of the Philistine league, and finally shattered the united armies under Sibi at Raphia, near the Egyptian border. Damascus and Samaria promptly submitted, and the dream of independence faded into mist.

<sup>1</sup> The rod is doubtless Shalmaneser, and the asp or seraph (winged serpent) his successor Sargon.

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In the meantime, however, fresh elements of trouble were brewing. The Ethiopian king, Piankhi, who succeeded his father in 741, had from the first pursued a steady policy of absorbing Egypt. By 721 he was already in possession of Upper Egypt as far north as Heracleopolis. The following year saw the conquest of Memphis, and the rapid extension of his rule over the Delta. The rising power of Bocchoris, prince of Sais, and afterwards Pharaoh of the Twenty-Fourth Dynasty (718-12), interposed a temporary check on his ambitions. But in the latter year his brother and successor, Shabaka, overthrew Bocchoris, assumed the lordship of Egypt, and became the founder of the powerful Twenty-Fifth or Ethiopian Dynasty. All this naturally reacted on the struggling nations of Syria and Babylonia. They had failed for want of a strong centre of resistance, and in the new monarchy of Egypt they seemed to find just what they needed. In Judah, moreover, a sudden change of temper had taken place. Ahaz died soon after the invasion of Sargon (*c.* 720 B.C.),<sup>1</sup> and was succeeded by his son Hezekiah, a man of far more heroic spirit. Chafing under the Assyrian suzerainty, he devoted all his energies to the cause of liberation. As early as 714-13 he joined Philistia, Moab and Edom in certain

<sup>1</sup> On the chronological difficulty *cf.* Skinner, I. pp. 81ff., and Whitehouse, I. pp. 20ff. The former defends the date 720, while the latter assumes a co-regency of Ahaz and Hezekiah from 727 to 715.

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intrigues with Bocchoris of Egypt,<sup>1</sup> and narrowly escaped destruction when Ashdod was reduced by the Assyrian Tartan, or Chief of Staff, in 711. About the same time he established friendly relations with Merodach-Baladan of Babylonia (xxxix. 1ff.). In these revolutionary movements Isaiah saw the stirring of the fires of judgment he had so consistently predicted, yet he struggled with all his might to avert the catastrophe. For three years preceding the fall of Ashdod he walked through the streets of Jerusalem "naked and barefoot"—clad only in the slave's shirt—as a sign that Egypt and her confederates would be led captive slaves before the king of Assyria (xx. 1ff.). With equal vehemence he denounced the covenant with Merodach-Baladan, to his enlightened understanding as fatal a step as Ahaz's surrender to Tiglath-Pileser (xxxix. 3ff.). His policy was still *quietness and confidence*—calm reliance on Jehovah and freedom from political entanglements. For a time his powerful influence kept the king within the limits of discretion, but with the murder of Sargon and the accession of his son Sennacherib in 705 B.C. all bounds were broken, and the prophet could no longer control the flood. In Babylonia, Egypt and Ethiopia (now firmly

<sup>1</sup> "The people of Philistia, Judah, Edom and Moab, dwelling beside the sea, bringing tribute and gifts of homage to Ashur my lord, were speaking treason. The people and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, carried their gifts unto Pharaoh, king of Egypt, a prince who could not save them, and besought his alliance."—Extract from Sargon's inscription relating to the campaign of 711.

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united under Shabaka), Sidon, Tyre and Philistia, the standard of rebellion was simultaneously raised, and Hezekiah definitely committed himself on their side. Having once made the irrevocable decision, he acted with characteristic spirit and energy. Jerusalem he threw into an attitude of defence, repairing the breaches in the wall, turning houses into fortresses, furbishing up the weapons in the House of the Forest, and collecting water in reservoirs both old and new (xxii. 8ff.). With his neighbours in Syria he formed an active alliance, of which he appears to have been the acknowledged leader, being personally entrusted with the custody of Padi, the Assyrian vassal-king of Ekron, who had been dethroned by his subjects. From Arabia he received a body of mercenaries for the defence of Jerusalem, and from Egypt the most flattering promises of help. Thus confidently he awaited the issue.

All this while Isaiah continued to raise his voice in protest. Hezekiah had been looking to walls and weapons, but had forgotten Him who alone could work deliverance (xxii. 11). He had been trusting in Egypt—that monstrous braggart, *Rahab Sit-still*, “which cannot profit, and bringeth no help, but only shame and reproach”—defying the counsel of the Holy One, who had said, “In turning (from your warlike policy) and resting (at peace) shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your



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strength" (xxx. 5, 7, 15). A course so vain and godless could lead only to ruin. Thus in a highly impressive image the prophet pictures Jerusalem as Ariel, an altar-hearth, about to be drenched in the blood of her own children, and visited with thunder and earthquake and fire from heaven.

"Woe! Ariel, Ariel,  
The city where David encamped!  
Add year to year,  
Let the cycle of feasts pass round!  
Then will I distress Ariel,  
And there shall be mourning and moaning;  
Unto me shalt thou be as an Ariel (altar-hearth),  
And like David will I encamp against thee.

I will circle thee round with entrenchments,  
And will raise up siege-works against thee;  
And low shalt thou speak from the ground,  
From the dust shall thy speech come in  
whispers;  
And then, in an instant, suddenly,  
From Jehovah of Hosts shalt thou be visited  
With thunder and earthquake and mighty noise,  
With whirlwind and tempest and flame of devour-  
ing fire" (xxix. 1-6).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A fringe of light has been added to the prophecy in vv. 5 and 7f



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But not only shall Jerusalem be brought to the dust ; the whole Egyptian alliance will be broken in pieces.

“ Woe ! they that go down to Egypt for help,  
And lean upon horses ;  
They that trust in chariots because they are many,  
And in horsemen, for they are so strong ;<sup>1</sup>  
But look not to Israel’s Holy One,  
And seek not Jehovah—  
Though He too is wise, and bringeth calamity,  
And calleth not back His words !

Behold ! He shall rise ’gainst the house of the wicked,  
And the helpers of ill-doers ;  
For the Egyptians are men, not God,  
And their horses are flesh, not spirit ;  
Jehovah shall stretch out His hand,  
And the helper shall stumble ;  
The helped one also shall fall—  
They shall all come down together ” (xxx. 1-3).

Among the chief promoters of the alliance was an adventurer of the name of Shebna, who had risen to be “ steward ” or vizier of the Palace, and was now actually building himself a lordly sepulchre

<sup>1</sup> Horses and chariots are peculiarly associated with Egypt (*cf.* 1 Kings. x. 28 ; Hos. xiv. 3 ; Mic. i. 13).

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near those of the nobles. Against him the aristocratic Isaiah inveighs in a piece of lofty irony.

“What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here,  
That here thou hast hewn thee a tomb—  
Hewing thy tomb on high,  
And carving thy home in the rock?  
Lo! Jehovah will hurl thee, hurl thee, O mighty one,  
He will catch thee, catch thee, and roll thee, roll  
thee, as a ball to a far-spread land;  
There shalt thou die, and there shall thy splendid  
chariots go,  
Thou shame of thy master's house” (xxii. 15-18).

While the kings and rulers were thus weaving their plots, the people were drifting along in a state of spiritual stupor, unable or unwilling to read the signs of the times. Therefore they also must face the ordeal of judgment.

“Benumb yourselves, and be numb,  
Blind yourselves, and be blind;  
Be drunken, though not with wine,  
Stagger, though not with drink!  
For Jehovah hath poured out upon you  
The spirit of deep slumber;  
He hath tightly closed your eyes,  
And hath heavily veiled your heads” (xxix. 9f.).

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“ Forasmuch as this people draweth nigh me with  
their mouth,  
And doth honour me with their lips,  
While their heart is far from me,  
And their fear of me is a commandment of men  
that is learned by rote ;  
Behold, therefore ! I will once more do a wondrous  
work,  
A wonderful and wondrous work ;  
And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish,  
And the prudence of their prudent shall hide itself  
in darkness ” (xxix. 13f.).

As they still refuse to listen, the prophet at Jehovah's command goes home, and writes his message in a book.

“ Go in now, write it down,  
Inscribe it in a book,  
That it may be for the time to come,  
A witness for ever ;  
For a rebellious people is this,  
Sons that are liars,  
Children that will not hear  
The teaching of the Lord—  
That say to the seers, ‘ See not ! ’  
And to the masters of vision, ‘ Have not visions of  
truth !

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Speak unto us smooth things,  
Give us visions of illusions !  
Get you out of the way,  
Turn aside from the path !  
Cease prating before us  
Of the Holy One of Israel !'

Therefore thus saith the Holy One :  
Because this word ye despise,  
And trust in cunning and crookedness,  
And stay yourselves thereon ;  
Therefore this guilt  
Shall be unto you as a rift,  
That sinketh, and bulgeth,  
In a lofty wall,  
Till suddenly, in an instant,  
Its crash doth come ;  
And its crash is like the crash of a potter's vessel,  
Shattered in pieces beyond repair,  
That there cannot be found  
'Mong the fragments a shred,  
To fetch fire from the hearth,  
Or draw water from the cistern " (xxx. 8-14).

For four years the energies of Sennacherib were concentrated on the enemy in the rear and flank. At length Babylon was captured, Merodach-Baladan driven into exile, and his allies in Elam and Arabia

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reduced to impotence. Then in 701 B.C. the storm burst on the West. With lightning strokes the invader smote Sidon, Zarephath and Acco, Ashkelon and Ekron, ravaged the land of the Philistines, inflicted a crushing blow on a large force of Egyptians at Eltekeh, near Ekron, overwhelmed the cities and fortresses of Judah, and finally shot his bolt against Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

In his own swift and vivid style the prophet has depicted the onset of the Assyrians.

“He is up from Pene Rimmon,  
He hath come to Ayyath;  
He hath passed through Migron,  
At Michmash he storeth his baggage.

He hath crossed the pass,  
His night-lodge is Geba;  
Panic-stricken is Ramah,  
Gibeah of Saul hath fled.

Shriek aloud, Bath-Gallim;  
Listen, Laishah! Answer her, Anathoth!  
A fugitive is Medeba,  
The dwellers in Gebim haste them away.

<sup>1</sup> The invasion of Sennacherib is described in sober historical prose in the extract from the Jewish Annals in 2 Kings xviii. 13-16, and in more rhetorical style in the two parallel narratives, 2 Kings xviii. 17-xix. 8 and xix. 9-35 (= Isa. xxxvi. 1-xxxvii. 8 and xxxvii. 9-38). Sennacherib himself has a long account of the invasion on the Taylor Cylinder, Col. II., ll. 34ff., an account which agrees in all essential respects with the extract from the Annals in 2 Kings.



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This very day shall he halt at Nob,  
He shall shake his fist—  
At the mount of the daughter of Zion,  
The hill of Jerusalem.” (x. 28-32).<sup>1</sup>

In dramatic contrast to the danger impending, Jerusalem was filled with mad rioting and revelry, the gay throngs crowding the house-tops, and spending their nights in “eating flesh and drinking wine,” though to many of the revellers this was but the banqueting of the doomed. The whole scene comes before us in the oracle of the Valley of Vision.

“What aileth thee now that thou’rt gone  
Each one to the house-tops,  
All full of shoutings, a city tumultuous,  
A township exultant?

Thy slain are not slain by the sword,  
Nor dead in battle :  
All thy chieftains have taken to flight,  
They have sped far away.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The poem traces an ideal march southward by the nearest route. Sennacherib actually followed the easier, but more circuitous, way along the Philistine coast to Lachish, from which he despatched a force under his Rab-shakeh to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Here too the perfect tenses are best treated as prophetic. The horrors of the coming siege—famine, flight and massacre—are clearly present to the prophet’s imagination.

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Therefore I say, Look from me,  
Bitter tears let me shed !  
Strive not to comfort me  
For the ruin of my people !

For a day of tumult and trampling and terror  
Hath Jehovah of Hosts,  
In the Valley of Vision—a breaking of walls,  
And a cry to the mountains.<sup>1</sup>

Yea ! the Lord Jehovah of Hosts  
Hath called on that day  
For weeping and mourning,  
For baldness and sackcloth.

But behold ! joy and gladness,  
The slaying of cattle and killing of sheep,  
Eating of flesh and drinking of wine,  
Eating and drinking, for ‘to-morrow we die.’

And truly Jehovah of Hosts  
Hath sworn in mine ears :  
Of a surety this guilt shall be purged not  
Until ye die ! ” (xxii. 1-12).

As the ring of blackened walls drew nearer to Jerusalem, the mood of the people underwent a change, and thoughtless revelry gave place to

<sup>1</sup> Vv. 6-11 appear to belong to a different context, the natural sequel to the prediction of the “day” being found in vv. 12ff.

## The Triumph of Faith

serious reflection, and in many quarters to despondency and despair. Isaiah seized the opportunity to make perhaps his most moving appeal to their better selves.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth !  
For Jehovah doth speak :  
Sons have I reared and brought up,  
And they—they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner,  
And the ass his master's crib ;  
But Israel doth not know,  
My people doth not consider.

Ah ! sinful nation,  
People laden with iniquity ;  
Ye brood of evil-doers,  
Children, that have dealt corruptly ;

Who have forsaken Jehovah,  
And despised the Holy One of Israel !  
Why will ye yet be smitten,  
That ye still rebel ?

The whole land is sick,  
And the whole heart faint ;  
From the sole of the foot to the head  
No soundness is in it—

## The Faith of Isaiah

Nought but wounds and weals,  
And bleeding sores,  
Which have not been pressed nor bound,  
Nor softened with oil.

Your land is a desolation,  
Your cities are burned with fire ;  
Your tilled land before you—  
Aliens devour it.

And the daughter of Zion is left  
Like a booth in a vineyard ;  
As a night-lodge in a field of cucumbers,  
As a tower for the watch.

Had not Jehovah of Hosts  
Left us a remnant,  
As Sodom had we become,  
Like unto Gomorrah " (i. 2-9).<sup>1</sup>

Whether it were the result of the prophet's appeal or the pressure of invasion, the mind of Jerusalem had now become sufficiently subdued. Hezekiah himself was compelled to drink the

<sup>1</sup> The best commentary on these pathetic stanzas is found in Sennacherib's record of the invasion: "As for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 strong walled cities, and the smaller towns around them without number, I besieged and captured by assault. . . . 200,150 men, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number I brought out from them and counted as spoil. Himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city. Ramparts I drew around him, and those who came out of the gates of his city I caused to return."—Taylor Cylinder, Col. III, ll. 11ff.

## The Triumph of Faith

dreeds of humiliation, to surrender Padi, and to send an abject message to Sennacherib, confessing his offence, and begging him to withdraw at the price of whatsoever tribute he might choose to impose, to strip both palace and Temple of all their treasures as indemnity to the victor, and even to hand over his daughters and other "women of the palace" (2 Kings xviii. 14 ff.).<sup>1</sup> Isaiah appears to have watched the degrading transaction in silence, for Jerusalem was but paying the just penalty of her deeds. But when Sennacherib broke faith with Hezekiah, and sent his Rab-shakeh, or Commander-in-chief, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem and the deportation of its citizens to Assyria, he rose in heroic resistance. Jehovah meant to purge Jerusalem, not to destroy it. There lay the bedrock of the new and greater Kingdom of God; and till the building was completed, Jerusalem was imperishable. Sennacherib's designs against the city were a presumptuous defiance of Jehovah, and he too must share the fate of the presumptuous.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "As for Hezekiah, the fear of the splendour of my rule overwhelmed him. . . . 30 talents of gold and 800 talents of silver, precious stones, lapis-lazuli stones, ivory couches, ivory seats of elephant-hide, ivory, ushu and ukarinnu wood, all kinds of valuable treasure, together with his daughters, the women of his palace, male and female musicians, he despatched after me to Nineveh, my capital city. He sent his ambassador to give tribute and make submission."—*Ibid.*, ll. 29ff.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah's sudden change of front has been a stumbling-block to many recent critics. But it seems in perfect harmony with the general tenor of his prophecies. His conception of holiness itself involved the permanence of good; and in the various crises of his ministry he stood consistently for this principle. The overflowing flood might reach to the neck, but it would not submerge the head (viii. 8). Let



## The Faith of Isaiah

“ Woe ! Asshur, the rod of mine anger,  
And the staff of my fury !

Against a godless nation I send him,  
And against the people of my wrath I charge him,  
To take the spoil and to seize the prey,  
And to trample them down as mire of the street.

But not so doth he deem it,  
Nor so doth his heart devise ;  
For destruction is in his heart,  
And to cut off nations not a few.

He saith : ‘ Are not my captains all of them kings ?  
Is not Calno as Carchemish ?  
Is not Hamath as Arpad ?  
Is not Samaria as Damascus ?<sup>1</sup>

‘ By the strength of my hand have I wrought,  
And by my wisdom, for I am the knowing one ;  
I have removed the bounds of the peoples,  
I have plundered their treasures.

all the falsehood be swept from Zion, faith and truth would yet survive, and become the pillars of a nobler state (xxviii. 16). Deep as the plough-share cut into the heart of the nation, Jehovah's purpose was not to go on forever “ opening and harrowing ” the ground, but to prepare the soil for a harvest of righteousness (vv. 23ff.). On the other hand, Micah appears to have cherished no hope of the salvation of Jerusalem (Mic. iii. 8ff.), though his words of doom contributed to the change of heart in Hezekiah and his people which caused Jehovah to “ repent Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them ” (Jer. xxvi. 18f.).

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to past conquests of Assyria, each one marking a step nearer Jerusalem. Vv. 10-12 are a prosaic application of the boast.

## The Triumph of Faith

‘ My hand hath found like a nest  
The wealth of the peoples ;  
And, as one that doth gather eggs that are left,  
All the earth have I gathered ;  
And there was none that moved a wing,  
Or opened mouth, or chirped.’

Is the axe to vaunt itself over the hewer therewith,  
Or the saw to lord it over the man that plieth it—  
Like a rod that should swing the wielder thereof,  
Or a staff that should wield what is not wood ?

Therefore shall Jehovah of Hosts send leanness into  
his fat,  
And under his glory shall kindling be kindled like  
kindling of fire ;  
And it shall devour his thorns and briars,  
And the glory of his forest and orchard on the self-  
same day,  
And the remnant of his forest trees shall be few,  
That even a child might number them ” (x. 5-19).

In another brilliant passage the prophet depicts  
the falling of the trees before Jehovah’s mighty  
axe.

“ Lo ! the Lord Jehovah of Hosts  
Shall lop off his boughs with terrible crash ;  
And down shall be hewn the lofty of stature,  
And the tall ones shall bend and fall ;

## The Faith of Isaiah

With His iron shall He strike down the groves of the  
forest,

And Lebanon shall fall in its majesty ” (vv. 33f.).

In this sublime oracle we have the unfolding of a principle that has received unique illustration in our own day. Jehovah may use the scourge as an instrument in the working out of His plans, but when the instrument overreaches itself, and sets out with destruction in its heart to bring all nations under its sway, He will tear it asunder, and cast it aside in dishonour.

With his mind thus stayed on the Divine purpose in history, Isaiah can listen to the surging of the nations in perfect peace.

“ Ah ! the booming of many peoples,  
That boom like the booming of seas !  
And the roaring of mighty nations,  
That roar like the roaring of waters !

But Jehovah doth rebuke it,  
And it fleeth far off, and is chased  
Like chaff of the mountains before the wind,  
And as whirling dust before tempest.

At eventide, lo ! terror,  
Ere morning, it is gone !  
This is the portion of them that despoil us,  
And the lot of them that plunder us ”

(xvii. 12-14).

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In this serene confidence he dismisses the Ethiopian envoys who have come to Jerusalem with a last offer of help. Jehovah needs no help of theirs. He is now patiently biding His time ; and when the hour has struck, He will put forth His hand, and cut down the oppressor, both root and branch.

“ Ah ! land of the whirring of wings,  
Beyond the rivers of Cush,  
That sendeth its envoys by sea,  
On papyrus vessels on the face of the waters !

Go, ye swift messengers,  
To a nation tall and sleek,<sup>1</sup>  
To a people dreaded near and far,  
A nation strong and triumphant !

All ye inhabitants of the world,  
And dwellers on earth,  
When a signal is raised, behold !  
When a trumpet is blown, give ear !

For thus saith Jehovah to me :  
I will look on quietly in my dwelling-place,  
Like dazzling heat at noon,  
Like a cloud of mist in harvest.

For before the harvest, when the blossom is past,  
And the flower becometh a ripening grape, .

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Herodotus' description of the Ethiopians as “ the tallest and most beautiful of men ” (iii. 20).

## The Faith of Isaiah

The shoots shall be lopped off with pruning-hooks,  
And the branches hewn away.

They shall be left each one to the vultures of the  
mountains,  
And the wild beasts of the land ;  
And the vultures shall summer upon them,  
And all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon  
them " (xviii. 1-5).

The prophet's faith was again justified. The advance of a strong Ethiopian army did, in fact, compel a hurried raising of the siege of Jerusalem ; but the final issue was in the hands of God. For, as Sennacherib marched south to meet his new opponent, the flower of his army perished ingloriously of pestilence on the marsh-land of Pelusium, and the proud conqueror had to lead home his scattered fragments in swift retreat, himself doomed in due course to fall a victim to the treachery of his sons.

" Insolent Pride, if idly nursed  
On timeless surfeit, plenty accursed,  
Spurning the lowlier tract of earth,  
Mounts to her pinnacle,—then falls,  
Dashed headlong down sheer mountain walls,  
To dark Necessity's deep ground,  
Where never foothold can be found."¹

¹ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (Campbell's translation), ll. 874ff.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PRINCE OF PEACE

THE passing of the Assyrian peril saw a great uplift of national spirit in Judah. Free at last from the nightmare of invasion, Hezekiah and his people gave themselves to works of public utility, the most notable being the Shiloah tunnel and reservoir, which came to light in 1880. To this interval of peace, in all probability, belongs the religious reform that likewise signalised Hezekiah's reign. The brazen serpent, which had degenerated into a fetish, was hewn down as a mere "piece of brass," unworthy of the worship of Jehovah; and a number of the high places appear also to have been stripped of their degrading associations, their altars destroyed, and their sites profaned (2 Kings xviii. 4).

In this real impulse after holiness of worship and life we can hardly fail to trace the dominant influence of Isaiah. After years of misunderstanding and failure his lofty patriotism had triumphed, and king and people both gave willing heed to his advice. The foundation-stone of the new Zion appeared now to have been well and truly laid, and the prophet could dream his dreams of a Kingdom of the Holy

## The Faith of Isaiah

One, in which king and princes should rule in righteousness, and their people dwell in peace and abiding security.

The first of Isaiah's Messianic prophecies is a lyrical poem of great beauty, lustrous with the glory of the dawn.

“ The people that walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light ;  
They that dwelt in the land of deep darkness—  
On them hath the light flashed out.

Thou hast multiplied exultation,  
And joy hast Thou increased ;  
They joy before Thee like the joy at harvest,  
As men exult when they divide the spoil.

For the yoke that was their burden,  
And the bars upon their shoulder,  
The rod of their oppressor,  
Thou hast shattered as on the day of Midian.

And every boot of trampling warrior,  
And tunic stained with blood,  
Shall even be for burning,  
As fuel for the fire.

For a child is born to us,  
A son is given to us ;  
And the rule shall rest upon his shoulder,  
And his name shall be called :

## The Prince of Peace

Wonderful Counsellor,  
God-like Hero,  
Father for ever,  
Prince of Peace.

Great shall be his rule,  
And of peace no end,  
Upon the throne of David,  
And over his dominion—

To establish and uphold it  
With justice and with righteousness,  
From henceforth even for ever :  
And the zeal of Jehovah of Hosts will do this.”  
(ix. 1-7).

The day of the old Davidic monarchy had been a stormy and troubled one. Its sun had risen in blood over the gloomy heights of Gilboa, and its morning of radiant hope had given place to a noontime of cloud and tempest, broken only by fitful gleams of light. Across its lengthening shadows had been thrown the lurid glow of the Assyrian invasion. But now at evening there had come peace, and men looked eagerly towards the dawn. In many minds hope continued, no doubt, to struggle with anxiety and fear. But from the prophet's forward view all gloom had vanished. The new day would be one of cloudless blue, a day of peace and joy, melting

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into the perfect bliss of heaven. For the King would be no warlike monarch, like those who had oppressed them, but one filled with the spirit of Jehovah—great in strength, greater in wisdom, and greatest of all in his thoughtful care and love for his people—a Counsellor more wonderful than Solomon, a Friend and Father more devoted than David, a Prince of Peace, who sought first the good of his subjects, and imbuing them with his spirit moved them also to live in peace with one another. Thus the lyric of dawn leads to the idyll of the Golden Age, in which Nature herself is transformed, and the beasts of the forest and field are seen quietly pasturing together, their ancient enmities gone, and the spirit of the little child controlling them.<sup>1</sup>

“ A shoot shall spring from the stock of Jesse,  
And a scion shall sprout from his roots ;  
And on him shall rest the spirit of Jehovah,  
The spirit of wisdom and discernment,  
The spirit of counsel and might,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of Jehovah.

Not by the sight of his eyes shall he judge,  
And not by the hearing of his ears decide ;  
But with justice shall he judge the needy,  
And with fairness decide the cause of the poor ;

<sup>1</sup> On the redemption of Nature, see a beautiful passage in G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, I. pp. 188ff.

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And he shall smite the tyrant with the rod of his  
mouth,  
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the  
wicked.

And righteousness shall be the circlet of his loins,  
And faithfulness the girdle about his reins ;  
And the wolf shall lodge with the lamb,  
And the leopard shall lair with the kid ;  
And the calf and the young lion shall graze together,  
And a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall be comrades,  
Together their young ones shall lair ;

And the lion shall eat straw like the ox ;  
And the suckling shall play on the hole of the asp,  
On the viper's den shall the weaned one trip  
about" (xi. 1-8).<sup>1</sup>

In neither of these pictures is the Messiah a God in any metaphysical sense. Still less is the Kingdom the purely spiritual one that Jesus came to found. The King is a scion of David's line, who sits on the throne of his fathers, and rules their dominion with all the outward insignia of power. Yet the idea is

<sup>1</sup> This prophecy is probably later than Isaiah, the metaphor in the opening verse suggesting the actual downfall of the Davidic monarchy, and the general atmosphere reminding us of the closing sections of the book (*cf.* lxxv. 25). It is, however, so closely linked with the earlier prophecy that it seems well to introduce it at this point.



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so transcendent that it cannot be confined within the limits of mere human sovereignty. Thus the Christian world has rightly read the prophecies as brilliant foreshadowings of the Kingdom of the Son of man, that Kingdom based not on earthly pomp and glory, but on faith and hope and love, with the child in the midst as the living symbol of the qualities that make for greatness in the Kingdom, and the "earnest expectation" that the whole created Universe "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." With as true an instinct has it found in the sweet and gracious vision of Messianic rule in ch. xxxii. a promise of the Kingdom which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

"Behold ! a king shall reign in righteousness,  
And princes shall rule with justice ;  
And each of them shall be as a refuge from the wind,  
And a covert from the storm—  
As streams of water in parched ground,  
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

And the eyes of them that see shall no more be closed,  
And the ears of them that hear shall hearken ;  
And the heart of the hasty shall know how to judge,  
And the tongue of the stammering shall be swift  
to speak.

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And no more shall the fool be called noble,  
Or the knave be accounted princely.<sup>1</sup>

Till on us the Spirit be poured from on high;  
Then shall the steppe become fruitful field,  
And the fruitful field be esteemed an orchard;  
And justice shall dwell in the steppe,  
And righteousness abide in the fruitful field.

And the work of righteousness shall be peace,  
And the fruit of justice eternal security;  
My people shall dwell in abodes of peace,  
In sure habitations and quiet resting-places.  
Happy are ye that sow by all waters,  
And send forth the foot of the ox and the ass ! ”  
(xxxii. 1-20).

Here, too, the vision is limited by the prophet's environment and sympathies. The coming Kingdom is aristocratic. King and princes rule “by the grace of God,” and their subjects render them willing homage. But Isaiah's aristocracy is like that of which Plato dreamed in his *Republic*, and which Carlyle and Ruskin taught our fathers to reverence—an aristocracy of character—under which the best and wisest govern in the highest interests of the

<sup>1</sup> The context is here interrupted by a somewhat prosaic definition of this new order of nobility—the nobility of noble aims and deeds—as well as an isolated prophecy on the easy-going women of Jerusalem. The true sequel to vv. 1-5 is found in ver. 15, the first clause of which is lost.

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people. Its motive is *Noblesse oblige*, and its fundamental principle is righteousness. With Isaiah "righteousness" is a word of large and liberal meaning. It includes all that a man ought—all it is "right" for him—to be and to do. What the good ruler must seek first and foremost is public justice. Thus the corner-stone of the Kingdom is justice. "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule with justice." But in the prophet's eyes justice is no mere balancing of the scales to weigh out the exact "pound of flesh," no soulless keeping of the ring clear for oppressor and oppressed to fight out their battles unaided : it is the throwing of the sword on the side of common equity, the deliberate attempt to apply on the broadest civic stage the Gospel of holiness, "to set right the oppressor, judge the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow." Thus justice reaches out on the one hand to freedom, and on the other to truth and brotherhood. The aim of the just ruler is to liberate and educate his people that the best that is in them may find expression. He seeks to open their half-closed eyes and their dull, heavy ears to see and hear plainly, to train their stunted or ill-balanced minds to judge rightly, and to loosen their stammering tongues that they may speak freely the truths that burn within them and press for utterance. Above all, he fosters their moral and spiritual growth, teaching them to esteem things at their true value,

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and to live in the spirit of honour, loyalty and brotherhood with one another. He himself is the perfect mirror of such "righteousness." Like a great rock in the desert, he offers his people both shelter from the heat and security against the choking drift.<sup>1</sup> Like a perennial stream he waters the oasis of their lives, and makes them bear fruit abundantly. And in times of trouble and difficulty, when the rain descends no longer in blessing but in pitiless fury, he exposes himself as a "refuge from the wind and a covert from the storm," that under his shadow they may find peace, and carry through their daily task in comfort. Thus the land becomes once more a Paradise of smiling corn-fields, fruitful gardens, and happy homes, where men and women work together in harmony, winning their purest welfare in the welfare of the whole.

While the outward form may be transient, then, Isaiah's ideal is true for all time. A righteous democracy must equally rest on the four-fold basis of freedom, justice, truth and brotherhood. At the centre of all lies justice. Apart from justice no nation can endure, however brilliant its gifts and far-reaching its influence. And justice is to be identified neither with the defence of vested interests nor with indiscriminate *largesse*,<sup>2</sup> but with fair play

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, II. p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> The former conception of justice is presented, for example, in Lord Hugh Cecil's *Conservatism*, pp. 164ff., the latter in the literature of revolutionary Socialism.



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in the fullest sense of the term. This includes not merely honesty in business, the payment of the standard wage for the standard hours of work, and all else expressly "nominated in the bond," but likewise the humanising of labour as a whole, the treatment of workmen as hearts and souls as well as "hands," and the throwing wide of the gates of educational and economic opportunity, that the poorest may be free to develop to their utmost the manhood and womanhood which God has given them, and in the richest output of which consists the true Wealth of Nations.<sup>1</sup> The demands of modern Labour are inspired at heart by a craving for such freedom. And, unless the craving be satisfied, the world cannot be made "safe for democracy." But without the parallel principles of truth and brotherhood, liberty descends into licence, and "government by the people and for the people" lapses into anarchy. If democracy is to be made safe for the world, it must be charged with the spirit of the family—the spirit of mutual confidence and loyalty—which recognises diversities of gifts, indeed, and renders honour where honour is due, but counts every service as worthy in the Father's sight, treats each member of the brotherhood by the "royal law" of love, and helps the weak and maimed ones according to their needs. It is now

<sup>1</sup> "There is no wealth but Life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."—Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 156.



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clear to the dullest intelligence that "we are members one of another," and that the health of each depends on the health of all. It is as clear that the law of health is the Golden Rule of Christ. Our welfare as a nation is thus bound up with the application of this rule to every sphere of human life, our political, business, and general social relationships, no less than our closer intimacies as friends and neighbours. Hopeful beginnings have already been made, but the principle must be applied on a far wider scale if we are to see the days which prophetic spirits descried afar off, and towards which humanity struggles through so much pain and conflict, when

"Love and truth are met together,

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other ;  
Truth springeth out of the earth,

And righteousness looketh down from heaven ;  
Jehovah doth give what is good,

And our land shall yield her increase."

(Ps. lxxxv. 11-13.)

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DECLINE AND FALL

THE immediate future was different from Isaiah's dreams. About 691 B.C. Hezekiah died, and was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a man poles apart from him in character. Not merely did he restore the high places which his father had defiled, but he built altars for Baal and Ashtart, and made his son pass through the fire to Moloch; he likewise imported new gods from the East, building altars for the Assyrian "hosts of heaven" in the very courts of the Temple, thus bringing the sin of Ahaz home to roost upon his people. Such as dared to oppose these innovations he pursued with a ruthless hand, shedding innocent blood very much, "till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other" (2 Kings xxi. 16). Naturally his fiercest vengeance was wreaked on the prophetic school. According to tradition, Isaiah himself fell a victim to the persecution, and with his passing the great cause to which he gave his life suffered a temporary eclipse. No commanding voice from Jehovah speaks to us out of the fiery furnace of Manasseh's reign. But

## The Decline and Fall

the light still shone in faithful hearts, and was soon to break forth with a purer glow than ever. Meanwhile, disciples of Isaiah were quietly infusing the ancient Book of the Covenant with the principles of justice and humanity they had imbibed from the master, and in this Renewed Law of Deuteronomy prepared beforehand a rule for the Kingdom whose advent he had hailed with such joy, and whose cheering beams continued to gladden and inspire him through all the darkness of the time of reaction.

The brief rule of Amon and the early years of Josiah's minority—when the king was still under the tutelage of the men who had led his father astray—were marked by no decisive change. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had settled down on their lees, saying in their hearts, "Jehovah doth neither good nor ill" (Zeph. i. 12). Suddenly their sense of security was disturbed by a terrible new danger from the north. About 630 B.C. hordes of wild Scythians had crossed the passes of the Caucasus; within two or three years they had overwhelmed Asia Minor, and in 626 swept along the Philistine sea-board, lapping the outposts of Judah, and threatening to devastate the land. The approach of the flood not only roused the slumbering conscience of the people, but liberated the voice of prophecy from its long silence. In 627 Zephaniah launched his thunderbolts of judgment, and in the

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following spring Jeremiah took upon his sensitive spirit "the burden of Jehovah." For five years he preached with passionate zeal, blended with exquisite tenderness and sympathy. At last the fallow ground seemed to be broken up, and there was promise of a harvest beyond his most ardent hopes. In the eighteenth year of Josiah (621) royal orders were issued to repair the Temple. During the progress of the work a copy of Deuteronomy was found by Hilkiah the priest, and promptly conveyed to Josiah through Shaphan, the Secretary of State. The reading of the book led to a thoroughgoing Reformation in worship and morals. Under the direct impulse of the king the high places were destroyed, and the horses of the sun and altars for the hosts of heaven removed from the Temple; the furnace of Topheth was defiled, "so that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire unto Moloch;" and the king entered into a covenant with his people "to walk after Jehovah, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and with all their soul—to perform the words of this Covenant that were written in this book" (2 Kings xxiii. 1 ff.).

To Jeremiah the first months of revival must have been a time of overflowing gladness. With eager enthusiasm he flung himself into the movement; he even appears to have gone on a missionary campaign among the cities of Judah, urging upon



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them the acceptance of the Covenant (Jer. xi. 1ff.).<sup>1</sup> But his enthusiasm was soon chilled. Instead of the welcome he expected as the messenger of salvation, the preaching of the Covenant brought him but hatred and persecution, especially at the hands of his fellow-villagers in Anathoth, who thought to "cut down the tree with its sap" (vv. 18ff.). Far earlier than others, too, he saw the hollowness of the Reformation. Under cover of religious zeal old evils persisted, while the revival itself was like the seed sown on rocky ground, that shoots up rapidly and for a season waves joyously in the sunshine, but at the first breath of tribulation or danger withers and dies. The crisis came through the death of Josiah in his reckless encounter with Pharaoh Necho at the battle of Megiddo (608 B.C.). The fate of the king who had played the foremost part in the Reformation seemed like the Divine condemnation of the whole reforming policy. Thus enthusiasm for the Covenant gave way to another strong tide of reaction, which continued to flow through the disastrous reigns of the last four kings of Judah, till the day of Jerusalem's downfall.

Against this tide Jeremiah stood practically alone, preaching the word of God with all the sincerity of his younger days, and even more than his former emotion. It was vain for Judah to hope for salvation

<sup>1</sup> On Jeremiah's relation to the Deuteronomic movement, cf. the author's *Prophets of the Old Testament*, p. 177, n. 1.



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if they trampled righteousness to the ground. Only if they amended their ways and their doings, and from this time forward "thoroughly executed judgment between a man and his neighbour, and refrained from oppressing the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and from shedding innocent blood in this place, and from walking after other gods to their own hurt, would He cause them to dwell securely in this land which He gave to their fathers" (Jer. vii. 5ff.).

For the moment, however, the omens were propitious. A year after the disaster of Megiddo the proud city of Nineveh fell before Cyaxares the Mede, and the Assyrian oppressor was crushed for ever. In 605 Nebuchadrezzar, the brilliant young prince of Babylonia, shattered the growing might of Pharaoh Necho at the world-historic battle of Carchemish. When the conqueror should naturally have carried his arms southward through Palestine, his father Nabopolassar died, and he was compelled to return by swift marches to Babylon. All round the horizon, then, fortune smiled upon Judah. But to the clear vision of Jeremiah this was only the lull before the storm. And soon his direst forebodings were realised. Having secured his succession to the kingdom, Nebuchadrezzar returned to establish his supremacy over the West. Yielding to superior force, Jehoiakim of Judah acknowledged his lordship, and for two or three years continued quietly to pay

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him tribute. About 599, however, a wave of patriotic excitement drove him to rebellion, and for this Jerusalem had to pay the penalty. A series of marauding expeditions from Babylonia, aided by Judah's bitter enemies the Edomites, vexed and ravaged the land; finally in 597 Nebuchadrezzar himself marched in force against Jerusalem. By this time Jehoiakim was dead, and the sceptre was in the hands of his young, misguided son Jehoiachin. The city fell almost without a blow, and the king himself, with the flower of his people, was carried captive to Babylon, his uncle Mattaniah or Zedekiah replacing him on the throne.

In the fate of Jehoiachin and his kingdom Jeremiah saw the main fulfilment of his prophecies, and for the future devoted himself to saving the remnant of Judah. So long as Pharaoh Necho reigned in Egypt, he was able to hold his people loyally to the truce with Nebuchadrezzar. Necho's successor, Psammetichos II., was too immersed in national affairs to embark on revolution. With his death in 589, however, the flame burst out afresh. The new Pharaoh, Hophra, headed a coalition against the Babylonian tyrant. In spite of Jeremiah's protest, Zedekiah was all too readily induced to join. Once more Nebuchadrezzar descended in hot wrath against Jerusalem, round which he began to draw his lines in January, 587. After a desperate siege, the strain of which was relaxed for one brief

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interval, when Hophra created a diversion in the South, the city was captured, the Temple reduced to ashes, and the mass of the people swept off to join their brethren in Babylonia, only a few poor survivors being left to bear up the banner of faith on the blackened and crumbling walls of Jerusalem (July, 586).

## CHAPTER X

### HERALDS OF THE DAWN

THE lot of the exiles in Babylonia was a dismal one. Torn from the land they loved, cut off from the Temple and its worship, subjected to harsh and degrading bond-service, and exposed to bitter insults and ignominy from their oppressors, they either sank into a stupor of grief and despair, feeling that God had altogether forsaken them, and they had nothing more to live for (Ezek. xxxiii. 10), or passed their days in fruitless lamentations over Jerusalem (Lam. ii., iv.), or broke into wild invectives against their enemies.

“Remember against Edom’s children

The day of Jerusalem—

Those that said, Rase it, rase it,

To the very foundation !

And thou daughter of Babel, that laid her waste,

Happy be he who deals thee

The dole thou hast dealt to us !

Happy he who seizeth and dasheth

Thine infants against the rock !”

(Ps. cxxxvii. 7ff.).

In time, however, the wound was assuaged, and the exiles began to accommodate themselves to their

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new surroundings. Acting on Jeremiah's advice, they "built houses and dwelt in them, planted gardens and ate the fruit of them, took them wives and begat sons and daughters," praying unto their God for the welfare of the city and land to which He had carried them captives, and finding in its welfare a measure of happiness for themselves (Jer. xxix. 4ff.). Gradually the bulk of the people passed from slavery to freedom, a number of them even immersing themselves in the industry and commerce of Babylonia, and thus acquiring wealth and rank in the land.<sup>1</sup> Among the more prosperous many seem to have yielded to the seductive influences of their environment, and to have abandoned the faith and hope of their fathers. But the loyal sons of Judah rallied round Ezekiel and kindred spirits in their efforts to lay anew the foundations of Zion. In their meeting-places on the Sabbath—the fore-runners of the Synagogue—they heard the Word of the Lord with gladness. Their hours of release from toil they gave to the study of the ancient Scriptures, the revision of history and prophecy in the light of the Exile, and the compilation of the Law of Holiness with its vital principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18). Thus a new note steals into their music. It was for

<sup>1</sup> The business records of the banking firm of Murashu and Sons, operating near the Chebar, the centre of the Jewish settlement, contain many Jewish names. These records are dated 464-405 B.C., but they clearly suggest a long process of commercial activity.



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their manifold transgressions that Jehovah had afflicted them, but they had now turned unto Him in sincere repentance, and He could not long remain silent to their prayers (Lam. i. 20ff.). Already prophetic natures like Habakkuk take their stand on the watch-tower of vision, and eagerly look to see what He will speak with them, what answer He will make to their complaint. And anon the answer comes, an answer to be written on tablets, with clear, bold letters, that one may read it running.

“ And Jehovah made answer to me,  
And said, Write out the vision ;  
And make it clear on tablets,  
That he that readeth may run !  
Though the vision may wait for the time appointed,  
It straineth toward the end, and will fail not ;  
If it linger, yet do thou wait for it,  
Since it will surely come, and not delay.  
Behold ! the soul of the wicked shall faint in him,  
But the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.”  
(Hab. ii. 2ff.).

To outward appearance nothing was more incredible than the waning of the power of Babylonia. The long reign of Nebuchadrezzar had raised it to a pitch of unexampled splendour and might. When his son Amel-Marduk succeeded to the throne in 562 B.C., it had all the promise of permanence. His magnanimity in liberating and exalting Jehoiachin

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(2 Kings xxv. 27ff.) naturally won him the friendship of the Jews, and thus further strengthened the basis of his power. But his wanton and lawless attitude towards his own subjects provoked a rebellion, and in 560 he was defeated and slain by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar. The latter reigned peacefully for four years, and was succeeded by his son, Labasi-Marduk (556). In nine short months Labasi-Marduk had fallen victim to another conspiracy, and Nabonidus, one of the ringleaders in the revolt, was elected to the vacant office. Till his accession the Empire had retained at least the semblance of health ; but during the seventeen lax years of his reign (556-539) its resources were rapidly drained. The king himself was a man of peace, devoted to the study of ancient documents, the exploring of ruins, and the restoration of temples. For his fruitful labours in this direction future generations must hold him in grateful respect. Unhappily, success was purchased at the expense of his people. The cost itself pressed heavily upon their shoulders. But the gravest danger lay in Nabonidus' sheer aversion from the responsibilities of government. When duty called, he was usually absent from his post. Thus a spirit of active discontent spread through the realm. His able and energetic son, Belshazzar, did what he could to support the tottering throne, but his best efforts were frustrated by the king's increasing lethargy.

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Meantime an omen of unmistakable significance had flashed across the heavens. About 558 B.C. Cyrus, son of Cambyses, succeeded to the principedom of Anzan, a petty Persian state on the northern border of Elam. By his personal magnetism and prowess in arms he rapidly subdued the neighbouring tribes, until in 550 he overwhelmed Astyages, son of Cyaxares, the Median conqueror of Nineveh, thereby winning the lordship of the united Medo-Persian Empire. The next few years were spent in consolidating his power westward as far as the borders of Lydia, the kingdom of Cræsus, the proverbial rich man of antiquity. Alarmed by his growing might, Cræsus entered into an alliance with Babylonia, Egypt and Sparta. With characteristic vigour Cyrus struck at the head of the alliance, fought a drawn battle at Pteria, some fifty miles east of the Halys, and, without waiting to recuperate his strength, followed his enemy's retreat to Sardis, the capital of Lydia, "with such speed that he was himself the first to announce his coming to Cræsus."<sup>1</sup> In fourteen days the citadel was stormed, and the whole coast-land of Asia Minor fell under his grasp (546). In the course of the same year Cyrus invaded Babylon, and, although no immediate result appeared, it was plainly the hand-writing on the wall. As Habakkuk had foreseen, the Empire built up with blood was soon to perish in blood, its

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, i. 79.

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cruelties to recoil upon its own head, and its ill-got gains to be the spoil of the nations it had spoiled (Hab. ii. 5ff.).

The approaching doom was hailed by Jewish prophets with an outburst of triumphal song, much of it charged with a spirit of relentless hatred against the oppressor, though its nobler melodies are steeped in the purest of human emotions.

A fine illustration of the fierce moral passion of prophecy is found in the great Ode on the Destruction of Babylon (Isa. xiii. 2-22), which manifestly belongs to the age of quivering expectancy ushered in by the victories of Cyrus. Here in six rapidly moving scenes we are carried through the whole awesome tragedy, till the curtain falls amid a spectacle of ruin as complete as that which enveloped Sodom and Gomorrah. In the first stanza Jehovah is heard summoning His warriors, the "proudly exultant ones," to execute His wrath against His enemies (vv. 2-4). The next pictures their approach in irresistible might, throwing terror upon the doomed people, who stare at one another in amazement, "their faces faces of flame" (vv. 5-8). The third stanza expands this scene of terror into an apocalypse of judgment which not merely overwhelms the earth, but darkens the very lights of heaven (vv. 9-12). The fourth describes the flight of the stricken Babylonian armies, "like a hunted gazelle, or a flock that hath no one to fold it," all that are caught



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in the flight being "thrust through" with the sword, "their babes dashed in pieces before their eyes, while their houses are spoiled and their wives are ravished" (vv. 13-17). In the fifth stanza the Medes are definitely named as the "weapons of God's indignation." Equally removed from personal greed and the instincts of common humanity, they "reck not of silver, and delight not in gold," while "no compassion have they on the fruit of the womb, nor with pity doth their eye look on children." Under their ruthless blows "Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glorious pride of the Chaldeans, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (vv. 17-19). And there shall be no dawn for her. No one shall inhabit her "to all generations." No Arab even shall pitch his tent or nomad shepherd fold his flocks there, but owls and other doleful creatures shall hoot amid the ruins, ostriches shall lodge and satyrs dance in the midst of her, "and howling beasts shall sing in the mansions thereof, and jackals in the pleasant palaces" (vv. 20-22).<sup>1</sup>

A yet more splendid oracle is the Satire over the King of Babylon (Isa. xiv. 4-21), one of the gems of prophetic literature. The brilliance of description is worthy of Isaiah himself at his best, the

<sup>1</sup> The immediate sequel, xiv. 1-4a, is an editorial link between the two poems. Though closely connected in subject-matter, the two are probably independent in origin, the latter standing somewhat nearer the final catastrophe.



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weirdly imaginative picture of the underworld has a real Dantesque quality, while the striking contrasts of light and shade stamp the author as a dramatic poet of the first order.

The satire opens with a sigh of relief and joy at the passing of the tyrant who had made all creation tremble under his lash.

“ How still is the tyrant become,  
How silent the terror !  
Jehovah hath broken the staff of the wicked,  
The sceptre of rulers,  
That smote the peoples in fury,  
With smiting that ceased not,  
And trampled the nations in anger,  
With trampling that stayed not.  
All the earth is at rest, is quiet,  
They break into singing ;  
Even the fir-trees rejoice at thy fate,  
The cedars of Lebanon :  
‘ Since thou wert laid low, there cometh  
No feller against us.’ ”<sup>1</sup> (vv. 4-8).

This idyll of peaceful beauty is followed by that stupendous scene in Sheol, where the ghosts of the dead monarchs on their shadowy thrones rise up to welcome the new accession to their ranks.

<sup>1</sup> The song of the cedars is prompted by the common Babylonian practice of cutting down trees in invaded territories (*cf.* Hab. ii. 17).

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“ Sheol beneath thee is stirred  
To meet thy coming,  
Rousing for thee the shades,  
All the he-goats<sup>1</sup> of earth,  
Causing to rise from their thrones  
All the kings of the nations.  
All of them answer,  
And say unto thee :  
‘ Thou too art enfeebled as we,  
Art made like unto us ! ’  
Brought down to Sheol is thy pomp,  
The sound of thy viols ;  
Beneath thee maggots are spread,  
And worms are thy coverlet ” (vv. 9-11).

In the next stanza the poet depicts the proud monarch's humiliating downfall under the figure of Lucifer, the star of dawn.<sup>2</sup>

“ How art thou fallen from heaven,  
Lucifer, son of the morning !  
Struck to the ground art thou,  
That didst bring down all nations.  
Thou—thou saidst in thine heart :  
‘ To heaven will I mount ;

<sup>1</sup> The he-goats are, of course, the rulers of the nations (*cf.* Jer. l. 8 ; Zech. x. 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Hélél*, Lucifer, or “ Shining One,” is almost certainly Venus, the morning star, described in Assyrian by the epithet *musbilil*, “ shining ; ” and the figure may be borrowed from some astral myth, “ in which a radiant star-demon was represented as presumptuously aiming at supreme deity, and as paying the penalty of his ambition by being cast down to the underworld ” (Skinner, I. p. 122).

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Above the stars of God  
Will I set up my throne,  
To sit on the Mount of Assembly,  
In the depths of the North ;  
I will mount o'er the top of the clouds,  
I will match the Most High.'  
But down to Sheol art thou brought,  
To the depths of the pit " (vv. 12-15).

While the spirit thus descends to Sheol, the unburied body lies dishonoured on the battlefield.

" They that see thee stare at thee,  
Regard thee closely :  
' Is this he that shook the earth,  
Upheaved the kingdoms ;  
That made the world like a desert,  
Tore down its cities ? '  
At peace in their graves do rest  
All the kings of the nations ;  
They have all lain down in glory,  
Each one in his house.  
But tombless art thou cast forth  
Like a hateful abortion ;  
Covered with slain thou liest,  
Gashed with the sword " (vv. 16-19).

And all this because of the havoc he has wrought of his own people as well as the rest of the world, a havoc that will turn on himself and his family to the bitter end.

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“ With them shalt thou not be joined  
In burial honoured,  
For thou hast ruined thy land,  
Hast slain thy people ;  
And no more shall be named for ever  
The seed of ill-doers.  
Prepare then his sons a butchery  
For the guilt of their fathers,  
Lest they rise and possess the earth,  
And fill the face of the world ” (vv. 20-22).

A different tone pervades the three haunting elegies in chap. xxi. The author is a visionary like Habakkuk, who looks out from his watch-tower in Palestine, and sees the tragedy unrolling itself, from the first muster of the Elamites and Medes, till their victims are scattered in flight across the desert. But there is no hatred in his heart against the enemy. Rather does he watch their sufferings with keen personal sympathy. His head reels and his loins are filled with anguish as he follows the train of horrors. Nor does he find in the fall of Babylon much hope as yet for his afflicted countrymen. The only comfort is that the vision is from God, who surely cannot forsake them for ever.

In the first of the triad—the Oracle of the Desert, with its rapid changes of scene and quick staccato rhythm—the prophet brings the last hours of Babylon vividly home to the imagination.

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“ Like the onset of storms  
That sweep through the Negeb,<sup>1</sup>  
It comes from the desert,  
From the terrible land.  
For a grievous vision  
Hath been shown unto me :  
The traitor betrays,  
And the spoiler spoils.<sup>2</sup>  
‘ Go up, Elam ;  
Lay siege, Media !  
Bring thou to silence  
The sound of her groaning ! ’<sup>3</sup>

For this my loins  
Are filled with anguish ;  
Yea, pangs have seized me  
Like a woman in travail.  
I am tortured at what I hear,  
Confounded with what I see ;  
My heart is dizzy,  
Horror affrights me ;  
The twilight I longed for  
Is turned into trembling.

<sup>1</sup> The Negeb is the rolling pasture-ground in the south of Judah.

<sup>2</sup> If the text be sound, the traitors are the Elamites and Medes (the followers of Cyrus), and the word is used in reference to the deceits and cruelties that accompany their warfare. Skinner, however, changes the actives to passives, reading, “ The betrayer is betrayed, the spoiler spoiled,” the subject in this case being the Babylonians, who reap what they have sown.

<sup>3</sup> It is better to read the third verb also as an imperative. The speaker is Jehovah, who wishes a quick end made of the agony.



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The table they range,  
The carpet they spread.<sup>1</sup>  
They eat,  
They drink.  
' Arise, ye princes ;  
Anoint the shield ! ' <sup>2</sup>

For thus the Lord  
Hath spoken to me :  
' Go, station the watchman ;<sup>3</sup>  
Let him tell what he seeth !  
If he seeth a riding troop,  
Horsemen in pairs,  
A troop of asses,  
A troop of camels,  
Close heed let him give,  
Yea, much close heed ! '

Then cried the watchman,  
With a loud voice he spake :  
' On my watch-tower, O Lord,  
I stand ever by day ;  
At my guard-post, too,  
I am stationed all nights ;

<sup>1</sup> In his vision the prophet sees a princely banquet spread in Babylon. The carpet is, of course, that on which the guests reclined for the meal.

<sup>2</sup> The feast is interrupted, like the famous ball at Brussels, by the sudden call to arms. The princes are the natural captains in battle, and their shields are rubbed over with oil to make the blows glide more easily off their surface (*cf.* 2 Sam. i. 21).

<sup>3</sup> The "watchman" is the prophet's *alter ego* in his state of ecstasy.

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And lo ! here comes a riding troop,  
Horsemen in pairs,  
A troop of asses,  
A troop of camels.'

And he answered<sup>1</sup> and said,  
' Fallen, fallen is Babylon,  
And all her idols  
Are shattered to earth.'  
O thou, my threshed one,  
My child of the threshing-floor,<sup>2</sup>  
What I have heard  
From Jehovah of Hosts,  
The God of Israel,  
I have made known to you " (vv. 1-10).

In a second vision—the Oracle on Dumah, or Edom—the prophet hears voices inquiring how far gone is the night of oppression, and what will the future bring them. He answers that the dawn is at hand, but another night of sorrow may fall on them. If they would know for certain, let them ask again.

" One calleth to me from Seir :  
' Watchman, what hour of the night ?  
Watchman, what hour of the night ? '

<sup>1</sup> The prophet asks the meaning of the vision, and in his rôle of " watchman " immediately answers his own question. The troop is the sign from heaven that Babylon has at last fallen.

<sup>2</sup> The metaphors forcibly suggest the crushed and helpless condition of Israel under the Babylonian tyranny. Cf. Amos i. 3 ; Mic. iv. 13 ; etc.

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The watchman saith :

‘ The morning cometh, but also the night ;  
Would ye rightly inquire, come back again!’”<sup>1</sup>  
(vv. 11f.).

In the last oracle—on Arabia—the prophet beseeches the hospitable tribesmen of Dedan and Tema to bring water and bread for the fugitives that stream through the desert and hide by night in the brush-wood, from fear of the pursuing sword and bow.

“ . . . . .  
In the thickets must ye lodge at eventide.<sup>2</sup>  
Ye caravans of Dedanites, bring water to meet the  
thirsty ;  
Ye dwellers in Tema’s land, greet the fugitives  
with bread.  
For from the face of the sword are they fled, the face  
of the sharpened sword,  
From the face of the bended bow, and the grievous  
press of war ” (vv. 13-15).

<sup>1</sup> He knows that the Babylonian tyranny is almost at an end, but is not yet sure whether the Persian rule will ameliorate the lot of the nations, or only plunge them into worse troubles.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the opening of the poem is lost, and it is therefore uncertain who the fugitives are. If we divide the verses according to the accepted text, the subject must be “ the caravans of Dedanites,” caught up apparently in the general flight before the Persians. The parallelism, however, seems to demand the above division of the verses, in which case the fugitives are most naturally to be found in the defeated and scattered Babylonians.

## CHAPTER XI

### VOICES OF COMFORT

THE heralds of dawn have brought little real hope to their people. Doom is decreed for Babylon ; but the future of Israel is still shrouded in darkness. As the day is about to break, however, new strains of music are heard, full of the joy of redemption.

The great Prophecy of Comfort, Isa. xl.-lv., is now universally assigned to the closing years of the Exile. We breathe no longer the spacious atmosphere of Isaiah's day. The kingdom has fallen, and the people lie prostrate and suffering, almost beyond endurance, though the days of their bondage are nearly ended. The local scenery, too, is far removed from the pleasant hills and valleys of Palestine. When these are introduced, it is with the wistful glance of the exile, fondly recalling his native land. The ground trod by the prophet's feet is the monotonous sand of Babylonia, blistered by the fierce blaze of the unclouded sun, and watered by sluggish streams and channels. The allusions that are thickly scattered through these chapters are likewise Babylonian : the temples and manufactories of idols, the processions of images, the gods and altars,

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diviners and astrologers, the crowd of merchants thronging the bazaars, the shipping, the treasures of gold and silver and precious stones, the trees and plants, even the animals. The great names that crossed the stage in Isaiah's lifetime have as completely vanished. The central figure is neither Hezekiah nor Sennacherib, but Cyrus, the coming deliverer, already represented in the flowing tide of his conquests. The literary flavour of the prophecy is as distinctive. There are, no doubt, certain turns of expression common to both sections of the book; but the subtle thing we call style is different. Isaiah we have found to be a master of clear-cut, polished diction, singularly lofty in tone, and lit throughout with brilliant gems of imagery. In the second part we may still move on the high planes of spiritual thought; but there is nothing of the artistic polish that lends such lustre to Isaiah's words. The style tends rather to diffuseness. The context is rich in repetitions. The even flow of the prophecy is interrupted, also, by reflections, meditations, soliloquies, and exchanges of personal confidence with God, more in the style of Jeremiah than the artistically finished utterances of Isaiah. The chapters remind us of Jeremiah likewise in the warm human feeling that suffuses the whole. Isaiah's words are full of the majesty of Jehovah. Deutero-Isaiah dwells rather on the infinite compassion of the God who is so High and Holy that mortal man can



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comprehend but the outermost fringes of His glory, but whose heart is ever towards His people and whose consistent purpose is their salvation. With this conception of the love and mercy of Jehovah, the peculiar tone of his prophecy is tenderness. If Isaiah be the Milton of the prophetic order, Deutero-Isaiah is the Virgil or Tennyson. His whole soul is bound up with his people, and he pours out with welling happiness the good news of deliverance that has come first to himself. The imagery is equally charged with emotion. Isaiah revelled in the freedom and splendour of Nature, the raging of the forest fires and the swinging blows of the woodman as he fells the trees, the overflowing of mighty waters, the "thunder and earthquake, whirlwind and tempest," the majesty of Lebanon, the beauty of vineyard and olive garden, the reaping of ears and the gleaning of berries; this prophet delights in those aspects of Nature that bring her closest to the throbbing heart of humanity, the lost sheep and the antelope entangled in the net, the soaring eagle and the helpless grasshopper, the lamb dumb before its shearers, and the like. But his similes are often drawn directly from the tenderest relations of human life. Thus Jehovah's love for Israel is stronger even than that of a mother for her sucking child, while the sorrow of stricken Jerusalem is like that of a widow bereft both of husband and children. The new-found gladness of Zion is equally compared

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to the exultant joy of a wife and mother who has recovered the dear ones she thought lost for ever.

The prophecy belongs at the earliest to 555 B.C., about which time Cyrus began to loom large on the horizon of history. As xli. 25 brings him from the N.E., we must further limit the date to the conquest of Media in 550. But the dazzling picture of his triumphs in xli. 2f., xlv. 2ff. almost certainly presupposes his campaigns against Cræsus and Babylonia in 546. The lower limit is fixed by the capture of Babylon in 539. From the somewhat more advanced outlook in xlix.-lv., it is true, a number of recent critics would assign these chapters to the interval between the conquest and the actual liberation of the Jews in 538. But the heightening of the prophet's hope is probably due to his increasingly vivid anticipation of deliverance. Though salvation is near, the arm of the Lord has not yet put forth its strength (li. 9), the cup of His fury has not yet passed from Jerusalem (li. 17ff.), and His suffering Servant is not yet "exalted very high" (lii. 13). We should thus date the composition as a whole about the year 540, when Cyrus was setting his plans in motion for the final assault on Babylon.

The literary structure of Deutero-Isaiah is as distinctive as its tone. Unlike earlier prophecies, it is no mere collection of spoken oracles, but a consecutive work of art. Though originally, perhaps, appearing as "a series of anonymous broadsides or

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fly-sheets, issued in rapid succession to be circulated among the exiles or read in their synagogues,"<sup>1</sup> it has been woven by its author into a species of lyrical drama, with a definite theme and *dénoûment*. While a consistent logical progress is not to be looked for, it readily yields itself to the following arrangement :—

Prelude (ch. xl.).

Act I.—Israel's Destiny among the Nations  
(xli. 1–xliv. 23).

Act II.—Cyrus as Jehovah's Anointed (xliv.  
24–xlviii. 22).

Act III.—The Servant's Sufferings and Glory  
(xlix. 1–liii. 22).

Postlude (chs. liv., lv.).

The prophet is inspired by no formal call to speak in the name of the Lord. Instead, he hears a succession of heavenly voices ringing in his ears. The first strikes a love-note of wonderful beauty.<sup>2</sup>

“ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,  
Your God doth say ;

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, II. p. xxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> “ It would be difficult to find in any language lips that first more softly woo the heart, and then take to themselves so brave a trumpet of challenge and assurance. The opening is upon a few short pulses of music, which steal from heaven as gently as the first ripples of light in a cloudless dawn.”—G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, II. p. 75.

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Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup>  
And call unto her—  
That her warfare<sup>2</sup> is ended,  
Her guilt absolved,  
That she hath received of Jehovah's hand  
The double for all her sins" (xl. 1f.).

In stronger tones the next voice calls for the clearing of the way across the desert, that Jehovah may lead His exiled people home.

"Hark! one calleth:  
'In the wilderness clear ye the way of Jehovah,  
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God!  
Let every valley be upraised,  
And every mountain and hill brought low,  
And the uneven ground become a plain,  
And the rugged heights a valley!  
Then shall the glory of the Lord be revealed,  
And all flesh shall see it together;  
For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken' "  
(vv. 3-5).

Like a trumpet the third voice rings out, summoning the heralds of the King to announce His coming to Jerusalem, in power and in love.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith renders the phrase, "Speak home to the heart," comparing the German, "An das Herz," and the sweet Scottish, "It cam' up roond my heart."

<sup>2</sup> *Warfare*, or *term of military service*, an obvious metaphor for the hard bondage of the Exile.

<sup>3</sup> The call of the heralds comes more naturally at this point, the intervening vv. 6-8 forming the transition between the songs of deliverance and the appeal to Jehovah's incomparable power (vv. 12ff.).

## The Faith of Isaiah

“ On a lofty mountain get you up,  
Ye heralds of good tidings to Zion !  
Lift up your voice with strength,  
Ye heralds of good tidings to Jerusalem !<sup>1</sup>  
Lift it up, fear not—

Say unto the cities of Judah, ‘ Behold your God ! ’  
Behold ! the Lord God cometh with strength,  
His arm having won Him the kingdom ;  
Behold ! His reward is with Him,  
And His recompense before Him.  
Like a shepherd He tendeth His flock,  
With His arm doth He gather them ;  
The lambs in His bosom He beareth,  
And leadeth them that give suck ” (vv. 9-11).

But is it really possible that the stricken cities of Judah will rise from their ashes, and the desolate land be clothed once more with crops and flowers ? In answer to this challenge a fourth voice sounds the watchword of faith in the immutable word of God.

“ Hark ! one saith, ‘ Call ! ’  
And I said, ‘ What shall I call ? ’  
(And he said :) ‘ All flesh is grass,  
And all the beauty thereof like the flower of the  
field.

<sup>1</sup> The collective feminine, “heraldess,” is used idiomatically of the whole herald band. I have consequently rendered it by the plural, “heralds.”



## Voices of Comfort

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth,  
When the breath of Jehovah doth blow thereon ;  
The grass withereth, the flower fadeth,  
But the word of our God shall stand for ever ' ”  
(vv. 6-8).

Moved by these angelic strains, the prophet himself takes up the lyre, and pours forth a rapturous hymn of praise to Jehovah, the God of transcendent power and wisdom, the Creator and Ruler of the ends of the earth.

“ Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of  
His hand,

And ruled off the heavens with a span ?<sup>1</sup>

Who held the earth in a tierce,<sup>2</sup>

And weighed the mountains in scales and the hills  
in a balance ?

Who directed the spirit of Jehovah,

And as man of His counsel instructed Him ?

With whom took He counsel, to bring Him insight,

And who taught Him the pathway of right<sup>3</sup> and  
the way of intelligence ?

Behold ! the nations are like a drop from the bucket,

As fine dust in the scales are they counted ;

Behold ! He lifteth the isles<sup>4</sup> as a grain,

<sup>1</sup> The span is the distance covered by the outstretched fingers.

<sup>2</sup> The tierce is a very small measure, probably the third of an ephah. To the infinite God the earth appears petty enough to be contained in that.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the right way of controlling Nature and directing the march of history.

<sup>4</sup> In II. Isaiah the “ isles ” embrace both the islands and the coastlands of the Mediterranean.

## The Faith of Isaiah

While Lebanon sufficeth not or burning, nor the  
beasts thereof for burnt-offering.  
All the nations are as nothing before Him,  
Things of void and vacancy are they reckoned with  
Him " (vv. 12-17).

How vain and foolish, therefore, are the idolatries  
of the heathen !

" To whom, then, will ye liken God,  
Or what semblance will ye set against Him ?  
An image ! the craftsman doth cast it,  
And the goldsmith o'erlays it with gold ;  
Each of them helpeth his fellow,  
And saith to his comrade, ' Bravo ! '  
The craftsman cheereth the goldsmith,  
He that wieldeth the hammer him that worketh  
with mallet,  
Saying of the joining, ' 'Tis good,'  
While he fastens it firmly with nails.<sup>1</sup>  
He that would make him a likeness of wood  
Chooseth a tree that will not rot ;  
Then he seeketh a cunning workman  
To set up an image that will not give way " <sup>2</sup>  
(vv. 18-20).

<sup>1</sup> These two verses are recovered from xli. 6f., where they have been wrongly inserted. The meaning of ver. 7b is very uncertain. Probably, however, the " wielder of the hammer " is identical with the craftsman, and the " worker with mallet " a description of the goldsmith, with his finer art.

<sup>2</sup> The tone of irony recalls John Knox's contemptuous treatment of the " paynted brod "—the image of the Virgin—that was thrust upon him and his companions in exile. He " tooke the idole, and advisitie looking about, he caist

## Voices of Comfort

Anew the language rises and swells in adoration.

“ Do ye not know ;

Do ye not hear ?

Hath it not been shown you from the first of time ;

Have ye not understood from the founding of the  
earth ?

He it is that sitteth above the circle<sup>1</sup> of the earth,

The inhabitants whereof are as grasshoppers,

That stretcheth the heavens as a curtain,

And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in,

That bringeth princes to nothing,

And maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

Scarce ever be they planted, scarce ever be they  
sown,

Scarce ever hath their stock been rooted in the  
earth,

Than He bloweth upon them, and they wither away,

And the whirlwind beareth them off like stubble.

To whom then will ye liken me, to whom compare me,

That I may match with him ? the Holy One  
doth say.

Lift up your eyes on high,

And see ! who hath created these ?

He that leadeth out their host by number,

And calleth them all by name ;

it in the rivare, and said, ‘ Lett our Lady now saif hir self ; sche is lycht aneuch ; lett her learne to swyme.’ ”—*The History of the Reformation in Scotland* (Laing’s Edition), I. p. 227.

<sup>1</sup> *Circle*, probably that bounded by the horizon, rather than the vault of heaven, over-arching the earth.

## The Faith of Isaiah

Through the greatness of His might, and the strength  
of His power,  
Not one is missing " (vv. 21-26).

With such a God sustaining them, why should  
Israel be discouraged ?

" Why sayest thou, O Jacob,  
And speakest, O Israel :  
' My way is hid from Jehovah,  
And my cause doth pass (unheeded) from my  
God ?'

Hast thou not known ;

Hast thou not heard ?

An eternal God is Jehovah,

The Creator of the ends of the earth.

He fainteth not, neither is weary ;

His insight is unsearchable.

He giveth power to the fainting,

And to him that hath no might He increaseth  
strength.

Though the young men faint and grow weary,

And the flower of them utterly fail,

They that wait on the Lord shall renew their  
strength,

They shall put forth pinions as eagles,

They shall run and not be weary,

They shall walk and not faint " (vv. 27-31).

The words are addressed to Israel, but the Gospel  
they enshrine is true for all the ages. Men are still

## Voices of Comfort

held in bondage—more degrading than exile—the bondage of sense and sin, the bondage of fear, the bondage of self, the bondage even of duty. To many of us life is a tread-mill from which we seem unable to escape, and which brings us no real exhilaration or profit. But they that wait upon God in faith and prayer can soar from the prison-house to the high clear atmosphere of heaven, to bathe their souls in the radiance of the Eternal, to renew their strength at the fountain of grace, and to look out on life from the upward planes, to “see it steadily and see it whole.” Thus, when they return to the common paths of duty, they take up their calling with a new strength and courage, a zeal that laughs at obstacles, a zest and interest that make even drudgery a delight, and a hope that bears them up unflagging to the end. For just as fully after the eager enthusiasm of youth is spent, and Christian falls “from running to going,” does the glow of hope inspire him. The road may be dull and dreary, the task hard and exhausting, yet he will walk cheerfully onward, the light of faith in his eye and the sunshine of love in his heart, stooping to the humblest duties and bracing himself to the steepest Hills of Difficulty, turning aside at times to help lame pilgrims over stiles and pitfalls, or to give thirsty ones the cup of cold water, but with his face ever to Zion, till faith is lost in vision and love made perfect in glory.



## The Faith of Isaiah

“Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.”

“So they from strength unwearied go  
Still forward unto strength,  
Until in Zion they appear  
Before the Lord at length.”

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DRAMA OF REDEMPTION

THE glorious Prelude has been sung. Jehovah now comes forward to reveal His purpose among the nations. And first, in open assize, He challenges them to read the signs of the times.

“ Listen to me in silence, ye isles,  
And let the peoples await my pleading ;  
Let them draw near, then let them speak,  
Let us approach together for judgment !

Who hath raised one up from the East,  
Whom victory<sup>1</sup> meeteth at every step ?  
He giveth up nations before him,  
And bringeth down kings to the earth.  
His sword doth make them as dust,  
Like driven stubble his bow ;  
He pursueth them, and passeth on safely,  
By a path he doth tread not with his feet.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term is *sedek*, “righteousness,” a word which in II. Isaiah means all it is right or fitting that Jehovah should do, and hence connotes not merely justice, truth, consistency of character, but success or victory (as here), and even salvation. Cf. G. A. Smith, II. pp. 214ff. ; Skinner, II. pp. 51f.

<sup>2</sup> The reference here is doubtless to the speed with which Cyrus covered the ground in his victorious march (cf. p. 131).

## The Faith of Isaiah

Who hath wrought and done this ?

He that called the generations (of man) from the  
beginning—

I, Jehovah, the first,

The same also with the last " (xli. 1-4).

The swift triumphs of Cyrus had flung the kingdoms of the East into an agony of amazement and fear;<sup>1</sup> but for Israel they were like the streaks of sunrise ushering in the day of salvation.

" But thou, Israel, my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
The seed of Abraham my friend,

Whom I fetched from the ends of the earth,

And called from the corners thereof—

To whom I said, ' Thou art my servant,

I have chosen thee, and spurned thee not '—

Fear not, for I am with thee,

Be not dismayed, for I am thy God !

I will strengthen, yea, help thee,

I will uphold thee with my right hand of victory "   
(vv. 8-10).

All they shall be brought to confusion that sought Israel's ruin, but she shall be exalted, and shall glory abundantly in Jehovah.

" Fear not, worm Jacob,  
Thou maggot, Israel !

<sup>1</sup> See Herodotus, i. 141ff.

## The Drama of Redemption

I am thy helper, saith Jehovah,  
And thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.  
Behold ! I make thee a threshing-wain,  
A new one, furnished with teeth ;  
Mountains shalt thou thresh, and beat small,  
And hills shalt thou make as chaff ;  
Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall sweep  
them away,  
The whirlwind shall scatter them ;  
But thou shalt exult in Jehovah,  
In the Holy One of Israel shalt thou glory ”  
(vv. 14-16).

Already Jehovah is opening wells in the wilderness,  
and planting the desert with pleasant trees, that the  
return of the exiles may be a pilgrimage of joy.

“ When the poor seek water, but there is none,  
And their tongue doth fail for thirst,  
I, Jehovah, will answer them,  
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.  
I will open rivers on the barren heights  
And wells in the midst of the valleys ;  
I will make the wilderness pools,  
And the parched land fountains of water.  
I will set in the desert the cedar,  
The acacia, the myrtle, and oleaster ;  
I will set in the prairie the cypress,  
The plane and the box-tree together :

## The Faith of Isaiah

That men may see and know,  
May lay it to heart, and understand together,  
That the hand of Jehovah hath done this,  
And the Holy One of Israel created it " (vv. 17-20).

No god of the nations had ever foretold the future, and as little are they able to interpret what He is now doing.

" I have roused one from the North, and he cometh,  
From the rising of the sun have I called him by  
his name ;<sup>1</sup>

He shall trample on rulers like mortar,  
As the potter trampleth the clay.  
But who announced it from the first, that we might  
know,

From aforetime, that we might say, ' Right ' ?  
None there was (among you) that announced, none  
that proclaimed,

Yea, none that heard words from you.

I first announced it to Zion,

To Jerusalem sent heralds of joy ;

But of these there was no man, of these no counsellor,  
That, when I asked, could answer a word :

Behold ! they are all of them nought, their works a  
vanity,

Their molten images wind and chaos " (vv. 25-29).

But the great God who made the heavens and earth is the God of Israel, that alone doeth wonders

<sup>1</sup> To " call by name " is to admit to close intimacy of mind and purpose.



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for His people. He both called them and preserved them among the nations. He led them in days gone by, opening their way through darkness, and unveiling to them the things to come. And now that these have been brought to pass, He has new things to reveal to them, new and greater things soon to be made manifest.

“ Thus saith Jehovah the Lord,

That created the heavens, and outstretched them,  
That established the earth and its issue,

Giving breath to its people and spirit to them  
that walk therein :

I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness,  
And have held thee by thy hand ;

I have kept thee, and given thee

For a covenant to the people,<sup>1</sup> for a light to the  
nations—

Opening blind eyes, bringing forth the bound from  
the dungeon,

Them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

I am Jehovah,

That is my name ;

And my glory will I not give to another,

Nor my praise to graven images.

The former things, behold ! they have come to pass,

And new things I now declare :

<sup>1</sup> That is, Israel is the embodiment of God's covenant of grace with the world, the channel through which He is to convey that grace to all the nations. This idea is elaborated in the four Servant Songs (*cf.* pp. 183ff.).

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Before they spring forth,  
I will tell them to you " (xlii. 5-9).

An intermezzo of song from the prophet leads to Jehovah's announcement of the good news of redemption.

" I have long time holden my peace,  
I have been still, and refrained myself ;  
Now will I cry like a woman in travail,  
I will gasp and pant together.  
I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
And will wither up all their herbage ;  
I will make the rivers a desert,  
And will dry away the pools.  
And the blind will I lead on the way,  
I will guide them by paths that they know not ;  
The darkness before them will I turn into light,  
And the rugged spots into a plain.  
These are the things I will do,  
And will not turn back,  
While ashamed shall they be that trust in graven  
images,  
That say to molten things, ' Ye are our gods ! ' "   
(vv. 14-17).

All this time Israel lay " snared in holes and hidden in dungeons," blind and deaf to its Divine mission on earth, too dull of heart to understand the lessons of the past, and equally hopeless as to the future

## The Drama of Redemption

(vv. 18-25). But Jehovah has a message of wonderful cheer to impart to them.

“ And now, thus saith Jehovah,

Thy Creator, O Jacob, and thy Maker, O Israel :  
Fear not, for I have redeemed thee,

I have called thee by thy name—thou art mine.  
When thou passest through the waters, I will be  
with thee,

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow  
thee ;

When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not  
be scorched,

Neither shall the flame enkindle thee.

For I am Jehovah, thy God,

The Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.

Behold ! I give Egypt as thy ransom,

Cush (Ethiopia) and Seba in exchange for thee.<sup>1</sup>

Since thou hast been precious in mine eyes,

An honoured one, whom I have loved,

Behold ! I give lands in exchange for thee,

And peoples for thy life.

From the East will I bring thy seed,

And from the West will I gather them ;

I will say to the North, Give up !

And to the South, Withhold not !

<sup>1</sup> Jehovah promises Cyrus conquests in Africa, as a return for the liberation of Israel. Though originally contemplated by Cyrus (Herod. i. 153), these conquests were actually accomplished by his son Cambyses.

## The Faith of Isaiah

Bring ye my sons from afar,

And my daughters from the end of the earth—  
Even all that are called by my name,

Whom I have fashioned and made for my glory ! ”  
(xliii. 1-7).

In a further assize of the nations Jehovah calls Israel to bear faithful witness regarding the truth of His former prophecies (vv. 8-13), and then explicitly announces the impending fall of Babylon.

“ Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer,  
The Holy One of Israel :

For your sake have I sent to Babylon,

And will break down all their bolts ;

The Chaldeans will I cast to the ground,

And turn their joyful shouts to lamentations,

Even I, Jehovah, your Holy One,

The Creator of Israel, your King.

Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer,

The Holy One of Israel,

That maketh a way in the sea,

A path through mighty waters,

That bringeth forth (to destruction) chariot and  
horse,

Army and warrior together—

And they lie down, and cannot arise,

Are extinguished and quenched like a wick.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The allusion here is to the wonders which followed the Exodus from Egypt. Even these will fade into nothingness in comparison with what Jehovah is now about to do.

## The Drama of Redemption

Remember ye not the former things,  
Nor regard the works of old ;  
For, behold ! I am doing a new thing :  
Even now it springs forth ; do ye not perceive it ?  
A way will I make through the desert,  
And rivers in the steppe-land ;  
The beasts of the field shall honour me,  
The jackals and the ostriches ” (vv. 14-20).

Israel has, indeed, deserved no favour from Jehovah. They have all along burdened Him with their sins, and wearied Him with their iniquities. Their first father Jacob sinned ; their prophets betrayed their trust, and their rulers profaned the sanctuary, so that He was compelled to put the whole people under the ban and expose them to the reviling of their enemies (vv. 22-28). But now He is to pour out His spirit upon them, and bless them abundantly.

“ And now, hear, O Jacob, my servant,  
Israel, whom I have chosen !  
Thus saith Jehovah, thy Maker,  
He that formed thee from the womb, and helpeth  
thee :  
Fear not, Jacob my servant,  
Jeshurun, whom I have chosen !  
For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
And streams on the dry ground ;  
I will pour my spirit upon thy seed,



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And my blessing upon thine offspring ;  
And they shall spring up like grass among water,  
As willows by running streams.  
And one shall say, ' I am Jehovah's,'  
And another shall call himself by the name of  
Jacob ;  
And another shall write on his hand, ' To Jehovah,'  
And shall surname himself by the name of Israel ”<sup>1</sup>  
(xliv. 1-5).

He is the first, and He the last. Beside Him there is no God : no Rock or Saviour. He has blotted out the transgressions of His people like a thick cloud or mist, that no longer obscures the beauty of His countenance (ver. 22). Therefore let heaven and earth take up the strain and sound aloud His praises.

“ Sing, O heavens, for Jehovah hath done it,  
Shout for joy, ye depths of the earth ;  
Break forth into singing, ye mountains,  
The forest, and every tree therein !  
For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob,  
And will glorify Himself in Israel ” (ver. 23).

With this outburst of song the first Act of the drama ends. The nations and their gods are discomfited, and retire into silence. The prophet

<sup>1</sup> The prophet here sees foreigners attaching themselves as proselytes to the restored community, adhering to the worship of Jehovah, and taking Israelite surnames as titles of honour. In the “ writing ” on the hand there is an allusion to the ancient practice of tattooing.

## The Drama of Redemption

now tunes his lyre for the next part of his theme, the Divine calling of Cyrus and the near deliverance of Israel.

“ Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer,  
Even He that formed thee from the womb :  
I am Jehovah, the Maker of all,  
That stretched forth the heavens,  
That established the earth alone,  
For who was there with me ?  
That doth frustrate the signs of diviners,  
And maketh the soothsayers mad ;  
That turneth wise men backward,  
And maketh their knowledge foolish ;  
But confirmeth the word of His servants,  
And fulfilleth the counsel of His messengers<sup>1</sup>—  
That saith of Jerusalem, ‘ Let her be inhabited ! ’  
And of the Temple, ‘ Be thy foundations laid ! ’  
And of the cities of Judah, ‘ Let them be built !  
And their ruins will I raise up ; ’  
That saith to the deep, ‘ Be dry !  
And all thy rivers will I drain away ; ’<sup>2</sup>  
That saith of Cyrus, ‘ My Shepherd,<sup>3</sup>  
Who completeth all my purpose.’ ” (vv. 24-28).

The heathen prince Cyrus is not merely honoured as Jehovah’s Shepherd, who shall gather together

<sup>1</sup> The “servants,” or “messengers,” are the true prophets of Jehovah.

<sup>2</sup> The “deep” and the rivers are probably metaphors for the obstacles in the way.

<sup>3</sup> For *ro’i*, “my Shepherd,” many scholars read *re’i*, “my Friend.”

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the scattered flock of Israel ; he is the Anointed One—the Messiah—who shall inaugurate His world-wide kingdom.

“ Thus saith the Lord God  
Unto Cyrus, His Anointed,  
Whose right hand I have grasped,  
Bringing down nations before him,  
Opening doors at his presence,  
And gates that they be not shut :  
Behold ! I will march before thee,  
And will level the rugged heights ;  
The doors of brass<sup>1</sup> will I break in pieces,  
And the bars of iron will I hew asunder ;  
I will give thee also treasures of darkness,  
Even the hoards of secret places,  
That thou mayest know that I am Jehovah,  
The God of Israel, that calleth thee by thy name.

For my servant Jacob's sake,  
And Israel, my chosen one,  
I have called thee by thy name,  
I have surnamed thee, though thou knewest me  
not.

I am Jehovah, and none else—  
Beside me there is no God.  
The loins of kings will I unloose,  
But thee will I gird, though thou knewest me not,

<sup>1</sup> Babylon had 100 gates, “ all of brass,” according to Herodotus, i. 179.

## The Drama of Redemption

That men may know, from the rising of the sun,  
And from the setting thereof, that there is none  
beside me.

I am Jehovah, and none else,  
That doth fashion light, and create the darkness,  
That maketh weal and createth woe—

I, Jehovah, am He that doeth all these things”  
(xlv. 1-7).

Why should Israel object because God is to work through an instrument like this ? Has not the potter complete power over the clay, and the father over his children ? Is not the Maker of all things, then, free to choose the ways and means by which He shall accomplish His ends ? (vv. 9-11).

“ It was I that made the earth  
And created man therein ;  
My hands did outstretch the heavens,  
And commanded all their host.  
And 'tis I that have roused him in righteousness,  
And am levelling all his ways ;  
He shall build my city,  
And shall set mine exiles free ” (vv. 12f.).

In a bold flight of imagination the prophet represents the vanquished peoples of Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba coming in fetters to Cyrus, falling before him, and making supplication to Jehovah, the God that had hitherto been “ hiding Himself ” from their

## The Faith of Isaiah

vain gropings, but now revealed His glory as the one Creator and Saviour of the world (vv. 14ff.). And He readily accepts their prayers, and welcomes them all to His service.

“ Thus saith Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens—  
He (alone) is God !

That fashioned the earth and made it—  
He (alone) established it !

Not as a void He created it,  
But fashioned it for a dwelling-place :

I am Jehovah,  
And there is none beside me.

I spake not in secret,  
In the land of darkness ;<sup>1</sup>

I said not to Jacob's seed,  
‘ Seek me in the void ! ’

I, Jehovah, speak what is right,  
Declare things that are true.

Assemble yourselves, therefore, and come—

Draw nigh together, ye remnants<sup>2</sup> of the nations !  
Witless are they that bear (in procession)

The wood of their graven images,  
And offer their prayers to a god  
That cannot save.

Declare ye, bring forward (your case),  
Let men take counsel together !

<sup>1</sup> “ Jehovah's invitation has not been like a dark, trackless desert, but a light in which men might walk towards an assured goal ” (Skinner).

<sup>2</sup> The remnants, or “ escaped ones,” are the survivors of the judgment that Jehovah brings on them through the instrumentality of Cyrus.



## The Drama of Redemption

Who did show this from of old,  
Announced it aforetime ?  
Was it not I, Jehovah—  
No other God than I ?  
A righteous God, and a Saviour<sup>1</sup>—  
No one beside me !

Turn then to me, and be saved,  
All ends of the earth !<sup>2</sup>  
For I am God, and none else—  
By myself have I sworn :  
Truth is gone out of my mouth,  
A word that shall not return—  
That to me shall bend every knee,  
And every tongue shall swear.  
'In Jehovah alone,' shall they say,  
'I have victory and strength.'  
And to Him shall come abashed  
All that were wroth with Him ;  
While in Him shall triumph and glory  
All the seed of Israel." (vv. 18-25).

The prelude to the act of deliverance is the downfall of Babylon. And already the prophet can see in his visions the gods Bel and Nebo hurled from their lordly towers, lying bent and crumpled upon the ground, powerless to save their own images,

<sup>1</sup> Here "righteousness" is directly equated with "salvation" (*cf.* p. 155, n. 1).

<sup>2</sup> "This invitation is the divinest word in all the Old Testament."—Glazebrook, *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, p. 197.

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which are "heaped as a load upon weary cattle," and carried into ignominious captivity (xlvi. 1f.). Then he raises his dirge over "the virgin daughter of Babylon," the mistress of kingdoms, who sat securely and said in her heart, "I am, and no one beside me," but soon shall be plucked from her throne, and made to strip off her train, unbare her thigh, and wade through streams, and in an alien land take the mill-stones and grind the meal, like the unhappy slaves that were the victims of her present cruelty (ch. xlvii.). With a renewed allusion to Jehovah's choice of Cyrus as the instrument of His redeeming love (xlviii. 12-16), the prophecy breaks into a merry peal of triumph.

"Go out from Babylon,  
Flee from the Chaldees !  
With loud song proclaim ye,  
Make this to be heard !  
Carry it forth  
To the ends of the earth !  
Say, Jehovah hath ransomed  
Jacob His servant !  
They thirsted not  
When He led them through deserts.  
Water from the rock  
He made flow for them ;  
He cleft the rock,  
And the waters gushed forth " (vv. 20f.).

## The Drama of Redemption

The third Act opens with a touching picture of Israel's faithfulness amid manifold discouragements, and quickly passes to a radiant prophecy of her coming glory.

“ Thus saith Jehovah,

The Redeemer and Holy One of Israel,  
To the despised of men, the abhorred of people,  
The slave of tyrants :

Kings shall see and rise to their feet,

Princes, and they shall do homage—  
For Jehovah's sake, who is faithful,

The Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee.

Thus saith Jehovah,

The Redeemer and Holy One of Israel :  
In a time of grace have I answered thee,

On a day of salvation have helped thee—  
Restoring the land,

Allotting the desolate heritages,  
Saying to the bondmen, ‘ Go forth ! ’

And to them that are in darkness, ‘ Come to light ! ’

On all pathways shall they feed,

And on all bare heights shall be their pasturage :  
They shall not hunger nor thirst,

No sirocco nor sun shall smite them ;  
For their merciful Friend shall lead them,

And by fountains of water shall guide them.

And I will make all the mountains a roadway,

And streets shall be upraised (for them).

## The Faith of Isaiah

Behold ! these shall come from afar,  
Even these from the rising of the sun,  
And these from the North and the West,  
And these from the land of the Sinites.<sup>1</sup>  
Sing then, O heavens, and exult, O earth ;  
Break forth into singing, ye mountains !  
For Jehovah hath comforted His people,  
And hath compassion upon His poor ones ”  
(xlix. 7-13).

The brilliance of the promise leaves Zion amazed and bewildered. She has been so long forsaken—bereaved of her children, and it seemed also forgotten by her God—that she cannot understand how the joys of motherhood will be restored to her, and the bonds of love reknit between her and Jehovah. But in a passage suffused with feeling Jehovah bids her have courage. He has neither cast her off nor forgotten her. He has the image of Jerusalem graven on the very palms of His hands, so that the city is never absent from His thoughts. And soon the broken walls will be rebuilt, and the waste places reclaimed ; and the exiled sons of Zion will stream back to her in such numbers that she shall be confounded, and shall ask in sheer astonishment whence came they and who bare them for her.

“ But Zion saith, ‘ Jehovah hath forsaken me,  
The Lord hath forgotten me ! ’

<sup>1</sup> The land of the Sinites is most probably Syene (Assouan), where a Jewish colony had for some time been settled (cf. the Assouan papyri). This identification yields us the desired fourth quarter of the heavens.

## The Drama of Redemption

Can a woman forget her sucking child,  
And have no more compassion on the son of her  
womb ?

Should even these forget,  
Yet will I not forget thee.

Behold ! on my palms have I graven thee,  
Thy walls are ever before me.  
And now thy builders make haste,  
While thy destroyers go forth from thee.  
And thy waste and desolate places shall be restored,  
And the land that was ravaged shall be filled with  
inhabitants.

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold !  
All of them gather and come to thee.  
As I live, saith Jehovah,  
The Redeemer and Holy One of Israel :  
With all of them shalt thou clothe thee as with an  
ornament,  
And gird thyself like a bride.

And now shalt thou be too narrow for thine  
inhabitants,  
Though they that swallowed thee up be far  
removed ;  
Yea, the children of thy bereavement<sup>1</sup>  
Shall yet say in thine ears :

<sup>1</sup> The children of Zion's bereavement are those born in the land of exile. In ver. 21 these are regarded as born for her by a stranger, in allusion to the Oriental custom of securing offspring through a slave-girl (*cf.* Gen. xvi. 2 ; xxx. 3 ; etc.).



## The Faith of Isaiah

‘ The place is too narrow for me,  
Make room, that I may dwell ! ’

Then shalt thou say in thine heart,  
‘ Who bare me these ?

I am bereft and barren,  
And these—who reared them ?

Behold ! I am left alone,  
And these—how are they ? ’ ” (vv. 14-21).

Zion’s doubts are groundless. She and her children have, indeed, wandered far from Jehovah. She allowed herself even to be sold for her iniquities ; but He sent her no “ bill of divorce ”—she is still His bride. His heart has been hers during all the years of estrangement, and now He is welcoming both her and her children back to His embrace. All He asks for is her trust and love. If she respond, she will never be put to shame ; her very enemies will pay homage to her, and all flesh will acknowledge that He is her Saviour and Redeemer, her Lord and Defender to the end.

“ Behold ! I will lift up my hand to the nations,  
And to the peoples raise my banner ;  
And they shall bring thy sons in the bosom (of their robes),  
And thy daughters shall be borne on the shoulder.

## The Drama of Redemption

And kings shall be thy foster-fathers,  
And their queens thy nursing-mothers ;  
With their faces to the earth shall they pay thee  
homage,  
And shall lick the dust of thy feet ;  
Then shalt thou know that I am Jehovah,  
In whom none that trust shall be put to shame.

Can the prey be snatched from the strong man,  
Or the tyrant's captives escape ?  
Even should the strong man's captives be taken,  
And the prey of the tyrant be rescued,  
Yet thy cause will I take up,  
And thy children will I save.  
But thine oppressors will I cause to eat their own  
flesh,  
And they shall be drunken with their own blood  
as with must ;  
And all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy  
Saviour,  
And thy Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob.

Where is the bill of your mother's divorce,  
With which I sent her away ?  
Or who is the creditor of mine  
To whom I sold you ?  
Behold ! for your sins were ye sold,  
And for your transgressions was your mother sent  
away.

## The Faith of Isaiah

Why then, when I came, was there no man (to greet  
me),

None, when I called, to answer ?

Is my hand too short to redeem,

Is there no power with me to deliver ? ”

(xliv. 22-1.2 ).

Israel answers the challenge under the guise of the Servant of Jehovah. She has lent her ear diligently to His word, and for His sake has endured much despite and persecution. But through all her sufferings she has found Him an ever-present help, and has never been put to confusion. In acknowledgement of this faith, Jehovah assures all those who pursue righteousness that the hour of their deliverance is near, and that the present distresses will yield to everlasting glory.

“ Harken to me, ye that follow righteousness,

That seek Jehovah ;

Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn,

And the quarry whence ye were digged ;

Look unto Abraham your father,

And Sarah that bare you !

For, when he was but one, I called him,

I blessed him, and increased him.

Even so will I call you from afar,

I will bless you, and increase you ;

For Jehovah hath comforted Zion,

He hath comforted all her ruins.

## The Drama of Redemption

He shall make her waste land like Eden,  
Her desert like the garden of Jehovah ;  
Joy and gladness shall be found therein,  
Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Attend unto me, O my people,  
O nation of mine, give ear unto me !  
For teaching shall go forth from me,  
And my judgment for a light of the peoples.  
Soon will I bring near my righteousness,  
And mine arms shall judge the peoples ;  
The isles shall wait for me,  
And in mine arm shall they put their trust.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,  
And look on the earth beneath ;  
For the heavens shall vanish like smoke,  
And the earth shall wear out as a garment ;  
The world shall be consumed like stubble,  
And the inhabitants thereof shall die like gnats ;  
But my salvation shall be for ever,  
And my righteousness shall not fail.

Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness,  
The people in whose hearts is my teaching ;  
Fear not the reproach of men,  
Nor be dismayed at their revilings !  
For the moth shall devour them like a garment,  
And the worm shall consume them like wool ;

## The Faith of Isaiah

But my righteousness shall be for ever,  
And my salvation age after age"  
(li. 1-8).

Zion may still lie prostrate under her griefs, drunk with the cup of Divine wrath which she has drained to the dregs, her sons unable to help her, for they are faint as "antelopes in a net." But Jehovah has already taken the cup from her hands, and will pass it to those who tormented her, who made her back "like a street for wayfarers" (vv. 17-23). And now He calls her to awake, and put on her festal garments, to meet the triumphal procession, and rejoice in her God's return to her.

"Awake! awake! clothe thee  
With thy strength, O Zion!  
Clothe thee with thy garments of beauty,  
O Jerusalem, the Holy City!  
For no more shall there come unto thee  
Uncircumcised or unclean.

Shake thyself from the dust, arise,  
Thou captive Jerusalem!  
Loose the bands of thy neck,  
Thou captive daughter of Zion!<sup>1</sup>

: : : :  
: : : :

Lo! hastening over the mountains  
The feet of the heralds,

<sup>1</sup> The intervening vv. 3-6 are a prosaic intrusion, probably displacing one of the original couplets.



## The Drama of Redemption

Proclaiming peace,<sup>1</sup> bringing good tidings,  
Proclaiming deliverance—  
Saying to Zion, 'Thy Redeemer is come,  
Thy King doth reign!'

All thy watchmen lift up the voice,  
Together they sing;  
For eye to eye<sup>2</sup> they behold  
The return of Jehovah to Zion.

Break forth into singing together,  
Ye waste places of Jerusalem!  
For Jehovah hath comforted His people,  
He hath redeemed Jerusalem" (lii. 1-9).

With the return to Zion Israel is exalted in glory, and all the nations see and acknowledge the salvation of Jehovah (vv. 10ff.). Now her children are more in number than before her separation from Jehovah, so many indeed that she must enlarge her tent and stretch forth her curtains without limit (liv. 1ff.). Jehovah's anger, too, has passed away for ever. In an outbreak of wrath He hid His face from her; but henceforward He will love her with a love everlasting.

"Though the mountains remove, and the hills be shaken,  
My love shall remove not from thee;

<sup>1</sup> In II. Isaiah "peace" means general well-being or prosperity.

<sup>2</sup> That is, virtually, *face to face*. "Jehovah will be so near that the watchmen and He will be able to look into one another's faces" (McFadyen).

## The Faith of Isaiah

And my covenant of peace shall not be shaken,  
Saith Jehovah thy Comforter " (ver. 10).

The basis of the New Jerusalem will be set with malachite, and its foundations laid in sapphires; its pinnacles will sparkle with jasper, and its gates with carbuncles, while all its borders will be marked off with jewels. Its children will be all of them taught of Jehovah, and great will be its prosperity, within and without (vv. 11-13). A gracious invitation is extended to the scattered sons of Zion to share in the glory of the ransomed city; and the prophecy closes in an idyll of peace and joy.

" Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters,  
And ye that have no bread, eat !  
Yea, come ! buy corn without money,  
And wine and milk without price !  
Why spend ye money for what is not bread,  
And your earnings for what will not satisfy ?  
Hearken instead to me, and eat what is good,  
Let your soul be ravished with fatness !

For an everlasting covenant will I make with you,  
Even the faithful kindness I promised to David.  
As once I appointed him a witness to nations,  
A prince and commander of peoples,  
Lo ! thou too shalt call unto people thou knowest  
not,  
And people that know thee not shall run unto thee ;

## The Drama of Redemption

For the sake of Jehovah thy God,  
Even the Holy One of Israel, because He hath  
glorified thee.

Seek ye Jehovah, while He may be found,  
Call Him, while yet He is near !  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah.  
For, as the heavens are higher than the earth,

So are my ways higher than your ways,  
And my thoughts than your thoughts.

For, as the rain cometh down, and the snow from  
heaven,  
And returneth not thither, without having watered  
the earth,

And made it bring forth and bud,  
Giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
So shall my word be that hath gone from my mouth :  
It shall not return to me void,  
Without having done the thing which I please,  
And accomplished that whereto I did send it.

For with joy shall ye go forth,  
And in peace shall ye be led ;  
The mountains and hills shall break before you into  
singing,  
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

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Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress,  
And instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle ;  
And 'twill be for a name (memorial) to Jehovah,  
For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off ”  
(lv. 1-13).

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SUFFERING SERVANT

THE prophecy of Comfort has led us out of the shadow of death to the light of world-wide redemption. But what place have the experiences of the Exile in the development of the great drama? This is the theme of the four Servant Songs, which are woven like a design in gold through the texture of the work.

The Songs are distinguished in various ways from the rest of the prophecy. The metre is more regular, and the strophical arrangement more complete. The spiritual temperament also differs. The main part of the prophecy is buoyant and enthusiastic in tone; the Songs are restrained and even subdued. With this goes a certain shifting of emphasis alike in the conception of salvation in general and in the method by which it is to be accomplished. In Deutero-Isaiah as a whole salvation is primarily the deliverance won for Israel by the victories of Cyrus; in the Songs it is the redemption from sin mediated to the nations through the sufferings and death of the Servant. At the same time, the language, style



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and general view-point are closely akin. The Songs are thus most naturally regarded as genuine utterances of the prophet of the Exile, composed somewhat earlier than the rest<sup>1</sup>—probably before the star of Cyrus had risen above the horizon—and embodied in their present context as still giving classical expression to the author's deepest thoughts regarding the Divine calling and destiny of his people.<sup>2</sup>

If this conclusion be justified, we must interpret the Servant throughout as neither an individual nor the incarnation of an ideal—whether the personified Genius of Israel or the spiritual “Israel within Israel”—but as the actual Israel “regarded in the light of its purpose in the mind of God.”<sup>3</sup> And this interpretation seems most in harmony with the tenor of the Songs in themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The first Song sets in clear relief the Servant's mission on earth. If other peoples were chosen to enrich the world with the ripe fruits of law and order, beauty, wisdom and knowledge, Israel was entrusted with the task of “bringing forth judgment

<sup>1</sup> Thus xlii. 19-21 and xlix. 7 appear clearly to presuppose lii. 13ff.

<sup>2</sup> For a judicious summing up of different theories see Skinner's *Isaiab*, II. pp. 257ff. Skinner inclines to the idea that the Songs are the work of a separate author from Deutero-Isaiah, though kindred with him in spirit.

<sup>3</sup> Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> On the different interpretations of the Servant, cf. Skinner, II. pp. 263ff.; Wade, pp. 345ff. Skinner identifies the Servant of the Songs with the ideal Israel, and follows Sellin's suggestion that the ideal was transferred to the actual Israel when the Songs were incorporated in the prophecy. Wade applies the term throughout to the historical Israel.

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to the nations"—that is, instructing them in the principles and practice of true religion. To this end the people had been endowed in supreme measure with the Spirit of Jehovah, and through the revelation given to prophet and poet had been led in the way of light. In the past they had too often proved disobedient to the heavenly vision, but in the new age about to dawn they should take up their trust with fresh purpose and resolution, and carry it through to success. And that according to God's own method! While the Gentile nations pursued their ends by loud and aggressive means—the splendour of their armaments, the magnificence of their temples and palaces, the brilliance of their gifts of reason and imagination—the Servant of Jehovah was neither to "cry nor lift up, nor make his voice heard in the street"—he was simply to live his life in that narrow and obscure corner of the earth in which the Master had placed him, letting his light shine amid all darkness, malice and oppression, never discouraged when his labour seemed fruitless, and never losing patience with the broken reeds and flickering wicks of faith, but working and waiting in unfailing hope, till he had brought judgment to victory, and the distant lands came reverently forward to receive his teaching.

"Behold my servant whom I uphold,  
My chosen, in whom my soul delighteth!

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I have put my spirit upon him,  
He shall bring forth judgment<sup>1</sup> to the nations.

He shall not cry,<sup>2</sup> nor lift up,  
Nor make his voice heard in the street ;  
A reed that is broken he shall not snap,  
And a wick that flickers he shall not quench.

In truth shall he bring forth judgment,  
He shall not flicker nor break—  
Until in the earth he set judgment,  
And the islands wait for his teaching ”  
(xlii. 1-4).

In humble faith the Servant accepts his task. Addressing himself directly to the nations, he shows how Jehovah had predestined him from the womb—even before his birth in the goodly land of Canaan—and had been polishing him through the varied vicissitudes of history to be a keen-edged sword or pointed arrow in His hand. Judged by surface results, no doubt, he had failed in his mission. His words had been treated with contempt, and himself left rotting on the godless plains of Babylonia. Nevertheless, his cause was Jehovah's, and must prevail. Already He had given commandment that the scattered tribes should be gathered together,

<sup>1</sup> *Mishpat*, “judgment,” like the Arabic *dīn*, is virtually equivalent to religion in its practical aspect.

<sup>2</sup> *Cry*, literally “shriek.” The Servant is to be no screamer or hysterical shouter on the street.

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and Israel restored to the position of honour He had designed for them. And this was the least part of His purpose. For Him merely "to upraise the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel" was altogether "too light a thing." Therefore He was soon to execute all His will—to make Israel "the light of the nations," so that His salvation might reach "to the end of the earth."

"Listen, O isles, unto me,  
Hearken, ye peoples afar !  
Jehovah did call me from the womb,  
From the bowels of my mother He mentioned  
my name.

He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,  
In the shadow of His hand He hid me ;  
He made me as a polished arrow,  
In His quiver He concealed me.

He said to me, 'Thou art my Servant,  
Israel, in whom I will make myself glorious.'  
Thus honoured I was in the eyes of Jehovah,  
And my God became my strength.

As for me—I said, 'In vain have I laboured,  
Idly, for nought, have I spent my strength ;  
Nevertheless, my right is with Jehovah,  
And my reward with my God.'

## The Faith of Isaiah

And now thus saith Jehovah,  
Who formed me from the womb to be His  
Servant  
(And hath purposed) to bring back Jacob to Himself,  
And that Israel should be gathered unto Him :<sup>1</sup>

‘Too light a thing it is (for me) to upraise the tribes  
of Israel,  
And the preserved of Israel to restore ;  
So I will make thee a light of the nations,  
That my salvation may reach to the end of the  
earth ’ ” (xlix. 1-6).

It is a sinister commentary on human nature that the word martyr, “ witness-bearer,” should have acquired the universal sense of innocent sufferer. Yet this transference of meaning corresponds to the plainest facts of life. He who stands forth as the prophet of righteousness can hardly hope to escape calumny and persecution even to the death. This is the aspect of the Servant’s ministry brought out in the third Song. He has been a faithful witness, listening “ morning by morning ” for the word of Jehovah,

<sup>1</sup> The rendering of A.V. and R.V., which is followed by the majority of commentators, draws a distinction between the Servant and Israel as a whole, the former being limited to the loyal Israel—the invisible Church of that age—through whose faithful witness and sufferings the sinful people was first to be restored, and Jehovah’s salvation thence extended to the end of the earth. It is, however, more in harmony with the general view-point of the prophecy, and the express identification of the Servant with Israel in ver. 3, to regard Jehovah as the subject, and to see in the restoration of the Servant=Israel the beginning of His purpose of universal salvation (*cf.* Peake, *Problem of Suffering*, pp. 46f.).



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and then sending it abroad either as a sharp arrow piercing the heart and conscience of the wicked, or as a message of comfort and encouragement for the weary ; but the only apparent result is to bring upon his own head insult, shame and sorrow. Like his prototype Jeremiah, he has been sorely perplexed by the problem, and at times even tempted to relinquish his trust. But faith sustains him ; and he finds in his very sufferings the bridge to a closer intimacy with God, and thus to the strengthening of his own heart and will.

“ The Lord Jehovah hath given me  
The disciple’s tongue,  
That I may learn how to succour  
The weary with words.

Each morning He wakeneth mine ear  
To hear like disciples ;<sup>1</sup>  
And I have not been rebellious,  
I have turned not backward.

My back I gave to the smiters,  
And my cheeks to the pluckers of hair ;  
My face I concealed not  
From shame and spitting.

<sup>1</sup> “ He means that his ear has not only been pulled or twitched, as for sluggish and indolent persons, but has been formed and trained. . . . This makes still more evident the truth of what we have formerly said, that none are good teachers but those who have been good scholars.”—Calvin, *Commentary on Israel*, E.T., IV. p. 54.

## The Faith of Isaiah

The Lord Jehovah doth help me,  
Thus am I not confounded ;  
I have set my face like a flint,  
And I know I shall not be shamed.

Near is my Justifier—who will contend with me ?  
Let us stand up together !  
Who is mine adversary (in judgment) ?  
Let him draw near to me.

Behold ! the Lord Jehovah doth help me ;  
Who then will condemn me ?  
Behold ! they shall all wear out like a garment,  
The moth shall devour them ” (l. 4-9).

About the time the prophet penned these brave words, Gotama the Buddha was wrestling with the same perennial problem. For him there was no solution save in Nirvana—the extirpation of all human desires. The more virile imagination of the Greek tragedians was within a few years to grasp the truth that “by suffering men learn.” But already the Jewish prophet has pressed beyond them to the Christian view of suffering as the perfecter of faith. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us ” (Rom. viii. 35ff.). To reach a full solution,

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however, the problem must be set on its broad social background. The principle of vicarious suffering is writ large over the whole face of Nature and life. The seed dies that the ear may unfold itself, and the coral insect that the barrier reef may be built up. The mother suffers for the life of her child, the father for the misdeeds of his erring son, and the patriot for the honour of his country. To the struggles and sorrows of the noblest of our race we owe our most cherished national inheritances—our peace, our liberty, our faith and our hope. This principle is nowhere seen so clearly at work as in the history of moral and religious progress. All through the ages advance in the knowledge and service of God has been purchased by the blood and tears of the martyrs. So it was conspicuously in the case of Israel. The suffering of the centuries, culminating in the death agony of the Exile, was the price of the world's salvation. This is the Gospel enshrined in the fourth and most sacred of the Songs, where the Servant is seen bearing the accumulated guilt of humanity.

“ Behold ! my servant shall triumph,  
He shall be uplifted, and exalted very high ;  
As many were appalled at him,  
So shall they now be amazed.

Yea, many nations shall pay reverence to him,  
Kings shall close their mouths .

## The Faith of Isaiah

For what had ne'er been told them do they see,  
And what they ne'er had heard they now contem-  
plate.

' But who could believe what we have heard,  
And the arm of Jehovah<sup>1</sup>—to whom hath it been  
revealed ?

He grew like a sapling before us,  
As a root from parched ground.

' No form was his that we should look on him,  
No (beauty of) face that we should desire him ;  
Marred was his face from a man's,  
And his form from the sons of men.

' He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sufferings, acquainted with sickness ;  
And as one from whom men hide their faces,  
He was despised, and we regarded him not.

' But 'twas our sickness he bore,  
And our sufferings he carried—  
While we accounted him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted !

' Yea, he was pierced for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities ;  
The chastisement of our peace was upon him,  
And by his stripes healing was brought us.

<sup>1</sup> That is, the manifestation of Jehovah's power in the destiny of His Servant. The speakers are most naturally identified with the heathen nations introduced in lli. 15.

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- ‘ All of us like sheep went astray,  
We turned every one his own way ;  
And Jehovah made to light upon him  
The guilt of us all.
- ‘ When oppressed, he bore it humbly,  
And opened not his mouth ;  
Like a sheep that is led to the slaughter,  
Or a ewe that before her shearers is dumb.
- ‘ Barred out from justice he was taken away,  
And his fate—who took thought thereon ?  
How he was torn from the land of the living—  
For our transgressions was stricken to death !
- ‘ They made his grave with the wicked,  
His tomb with felons,  
Although he had done no violence,  
Nor was any deceit in his mouth.
- ‘ But as Jehovah was pleased to crush him,  
And afflicted him with sickness,  
His soul shall He rescue from trouble,  
And make him see fulness of light.
- ‘ Once his soul hath made a guilt offering,  
His life shall he renew,  
He shall see a seed, shall lengthen his days,  
And the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in  
his hand.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of vv. 10f. is sadly corrupt and uncertain. I have taken the first couplet of ver. 11 as the sequel to 10a, treating the rest of ver. 10 as the fresh stanza, forming a natural transition to Jehovah's words in vv. 11f. A few textual emendations have also been made.



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Yea, many shall my righteous servant justify,  
And shall bear their iniquities ;  
Therefore will I divide him a portion with the  
great,  
And spoil shall he share with the mighty :  
For that he poured out his soul unto death,  
And was numbered with transgressors ;  
Yea, he bore the sin of many,  
For transgressors he interposed ”  
(lii. 13—liii. 12).

Though the figure of the Servant is here so strongly individualised that Western minds can hardly conceive him except as one distinctive personality, a true regard for exegesis compels us still to think of him as the community of Israel viewed from the heights of its Divine ideal. The prophet is portraying, not a future Redeemer, but one already accomplishing his mission before the eyes of the world. And the portrait is rather composite than individual, the features being drawn from many a suffering servant of Jehovah, though the influence of Jeremiah is specially marked. Read in this light, the prophecy yields us a profound philosophy of history, which helps us to understand, as far as finite minds can, the tragedy of our own age. “None of us”—nation as little as individual—“liveth to himself, and no one dieth to himself.” We are all so closely bound

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together by the ties of common humanity that the innocent suffer for the sins of the guilty, and on the other hand the guilty are saved by the sufferings of the innocent. The unspeakable agony of Belgium, Poland, Serbia, Russia, and Armenia, the endurance unto death of our bravest and best, and the patient anguish of loving hearts in all the war-spent nations of the earth, are thus no vain sacrifice, but the pledge of our redemption from every form of tyranny, oppression and barbarism, for through them the Lord and Father of mankind is bringing to birth in our midst the "new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter iii. 13).

"Careless seems the great Avenger; history's  
pages but record  
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old  
systems and the Word:  
Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on  
the throne —  
Yet that scaffold sways the Future, and, behind  
the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch  
above His own." <sup>1</sup>

But, though the immediate application of the prophecy was to Israel as a whole, it is none the

<sup>1</sup> Lowell, *The Present Crisis*.

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less true that it reaches its fulfilment only in Jesus Christ. Israel failed to respond to its high ideal. Faithful souls, no doubt, kept alive through the centuries the pure knowledge of God; but not even they attempted to diffuse among the nations the light in which they rejoiced. The people in general fenced themselves round with the iron fetters of the Law, and clung to privilege instead of duty. He fulfilled the prophecy, not by any mechanical correspondence with the details of the picture—for there are features that cannot properly be referred to Him—but by identifying Himself perfectly with the spiritual character and mission of the Servant.<sup>1</sup> Accepting the salvation of the world as the task appointed Him by the Father, He went about among His fellows, shedding light into darkened hearts, and speaking words of comfort to the weary, binding up the broken reeds, filling the empty lamps with the oil of grace, and fanning the flickering wicks into a clear, steady glow, patiently enduring insult and ignominy, learning obedience “by the things which He suffered,” and at the end giving His

<sup>1</sup> “The whole prophecy of the Servant is fulfilled in Christ, not in the superficial sense that certain phrases may be applied to Him, but in the far deeper sense that the whole spirit and scope of the prophet’s conceptions are verified in Him.”—A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 461.

“In Christ the genius of Israel found its fullest and most intense expression: the character imperfectly realised either by the nation as a whole, or by the best of its individual members, was exhibited in its completeness by Him. The work and office of Christ, as Teacher, as Prophet, as Example, as Sacrifice, exhibits the consummation of what was achieved imperfectly and partially by Israel.”—Driver, *Isaiah: His Life and Times*, p. 180.

## The Suffering Servant

life a willing sacrifice for sin. Thus it pleased the Father, not merely to make the Captain of our salvation "perfect through sufferings," but by His sacrifice to bring with Him "many sons unto glory" (Heb. ii. 10).

"How came the everlasting Son,  
The Lord of life, to die?  
Why didst Thou meet the tempter's power,  
Why, Jesus, in Thy dying hour,  
Endure such agony?"

To save us by Thy precious blood,  
To make us one in Thee,  
That ours might be Thy perfect life,  
Thy thorny crown, Thy cross, Thy strife,  
And ours the victory.

O make us worthy, gracious Lord,  
Of all Thy love to be;  
To Thy blest will our wills incline,  
That unto death we may be Thine,  
And ever live in Thee."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RETURN FROM EXILE

THE prophet's glowing hopes were not long in reaching their fulfilment. By the spring of 539 B.C., Cyrus had established his supremacy in the North and West. The way was now open for the attack on Babylon. In spite of the danger confronting him, Nabonidus was indifferent as ever to the cares of government. His people were distracted and rebellious, many of them actually favourable to the invader. Cyrus himself claims that he entered Babylonia at Marduk's command, and that the god marched at his side "as friend and helper." The campaign was short and decisive. About the tenth day of the month Tammuz (July), Cyrus gave battle to the royal troops under Belshazzar at Opis, on the Tigris, and after a brief struggle defeated and scattered them, taking Belshazzar prisoner. On the fourteenth, the outpost city of Sippar, forty-five miles southwest of Opis, fell without a blow. Two days later (on the sixteenth of Tammuz) Babylon opened its gates to Gobryas, the Persian commander-in-chief. On the third day of Marchesvan



## The Return from Exile

(October) Cyrus made his triumphal entry into the city. Thus ignominiously did "the glory of kingdoms" sink into Sheol.

Cyrus was a man of very different mould from earlier conquerors. Humane and generous by nature, he sought to rule by good-will instead of force.<sup>1</sup> The defeated king Nabonidus readily admits that "peace was secured for the city; Cyrus proclaimed peace to all Babylonia."<sup>2</sup> In his respect for the political and religious traditions of his new subjects, he showed a breadth and tolerance of mind almost unparalleled in the ancient world. His policy towards the exiled peoples in Babylonia was equally liberal. Instead of further attempts to break their spirit by unwilling residence near the centre of Empire, he determined from the outset to send them back to their original homes, where they might develop their own national life and character under his personal encouragement and support.<sup>3</sup> Among others, the Jews reaped the fruits of Cyrus' liberality. The decision to set them free must have been arrived at within a few months of the capture of Babylon, and active measures were soon taken to carry it into effect. Sheshbazzar, a Persian satrap, was appointed as Imperial commissioner to direct the movement.

<sup>1</sup> On Cyrus' generosity even towards his enemies, *cf.* Herodotus, I. 86ff.; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, III. 1ff., IV. 4f., VII. 2, VIII. 1ff.

<sup>2</sup> Nabonidus, *Annals*, III. 19f.

<sup>3</sup> On Cyrus' policy, *cf.* his Cylinder Inscription, ll. 31f.: "The gods who dwelt in Agadi, etc., I brought to their places; I caused them to inhabit a permanent abode. All their inhabitants I assembled, I re-erected their dwellings."

## The Faith of Isaiah

With him were associated two representative Jews—the heads respectively of State and Church—Zerubbabel, grandson of the exiled king Jehoiachin, and Joshua, son of Josadak, and grandson of Seraiah, the last chief priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. By royal decree permission was granted to as many as wished to return, with their families and servants, their personal belongings, and all that remained of the Temple treasures. The more prosperous among the exiles preferred the flesh-pots of Babylon to the hardships and uncertainties of the new life in Palestine; but a goodly number gathered around Sheshbazzar, strong in faith and hope and love towards their country and people. The summer of 538 saw the pilgrim bands already on the march, retraversing the road over which they and their fathers had been dragged, under so very different auspices, some sixty years before. Songs of praise and joy lightened the burdens of the journey, and early in the following year they found themselves once more within the precincts of the Holy City. An altar was forthwith erected on the Temple site, and the daily worship of Jehovah resumed. Already, no doubt, the exiles dreamed their dreams of a New Jerusalem rising in splendour, the beauty and pride of all the earth. But the sight of the grass-grown walls and blackened ruins damped their enthusiasm. Nor was there anything in their personal surroundings to rekindle the flame. The

## The Return from Exile

ground was impoverished, and the harvests were lean; the "people of the land"—those that had been left behind in the Captivity—were jealous of their privileges; while the heathen around them—the Philistines, Ammonites, Edomites, and Arabs, with the half-breed Samaritans in the North—were aggressively hostile. It seemed as if Jehovah Himself had abandoned them, caring nothing for the honour of His House and people. Thus the hearts of the builders grew faint, and the work of restoration ceased, the harassed people contenting themselves with simple homes for themselves and their children.<sup>1</sup>

A fine reflection of the spiritual temper of the community is found in the impassioned prayer, Isa. lxiii. 7-lxiv. 12, which fits most easily into these years of depression and anxiety.

The prayer opens with a thankful recognition of Jehovah's goodness to His people in the days of old, when He watched over them with fatherly love and compassion, bearing them safely through all dangers, and redeeming them from manifold distresses, though His goodness was requited by incessant acts of rebellion, which compelled Him to turn against them.

"The lovingkindnesses of Jehovah will I celebrate,  
His praiseworthy deeds,

<sup>1</sup> The account of the Return in Ezra i.-iv. betrays in certain respects the influence of later events; but there is no reason to doubt the substantial accuracy of the narrative. Cf. G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, II. pp. 204ff.

## The Faith of Isaiah

According to all that Jehovah hath wrought for us—

Who is rich in goodness—

Wrought for us according to His compassion,

And the fulness of His love.

He said, ' Surely they are My people,

Sons that will not deal falsely ;'

Thus He became their Saviour

In all their distress.

No messenger or angel,

But His own Presence saved them ;

In His love and in His pity

He redeemed them ;

He took them up, and carried them,

All the days of old.

But they rebelled, and grieved

His holy spirit ;

So He turned to be their enemy,

He fought against them " (lxiii. 7-10).

Even under the stress of sore affliction Israel found comfort in the thought of Jehovah's marvellous dealings with Moses and his people.

" Then Israel remembered the days of old,

Saying of Jehovah :

' Where is He that brought up from the deep

The shepherd and his flock ?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The shepherd and his flock are rightly identified "with Moses and his people" in the gloss which has displaced the second phrase of verse 11.

## The Return from Exile

Where is He that placed within them  
His holy spirit ?  
He that led at Moses' right hand  
His glorious arm ?  
He that cleft the waters before them,  
To make Him an everlasting name ?  
He that led them through the depths,  
And they stumbled not,  
Like cattle that go down to the valley,  
Or a horse in the pasture-land ?  
The spirit of Jehovah guided them,  
As a shepherd his flock ;  
Even so didst Thou lead Thy people,  
To make Thyself a glorious name ' "

(vv. 11-14).

But the days of His favour seem gone for ever. Israel lies at the mercy of her enemies, as though He had never borne rule over her. The adversary, too, has trodden down the Holy Place, scorning His power to defend Himself. How long, then, is He to endure this dishonour ? How long to keep His bowels of compassion shut up against His children ?

" Look down from heaven, and behold  
From Thy holy habitation !  
Where is Thy zeal and might,  
The tumult of Thy bowels ?



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Hold not back Thy compassion,  
For Thou art our Father.

Yea, should Abraham know us not,  
Nor Israel acknowledge us,  
Thou, Jehovah, art our Father,  
Our Redeemer of old.

Why then dost Thou cause us to wander from Thy  
ways,

Why harden our heart that we fear Thee not ?  
Return, O Lord, for Thy servants' sake,  
For the tribes of Thine inheritance !  
Why have the wicked profaned Thy holy place,  
Our adversaries trodden down Thy sanctuary ?  
We are become as those over whom Thou barest  
not rule of old,  
As those that have not been called by Thy name ”  
(vv. 15-19).

With heightening emotion the poet calls on Jehovah to rend the heavens, and come down to deliver His people. They have, indeed, sinned grievously against Him ; but He is their Father, and cannot surely hold His peace for ever.

“ O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, and come  
down,

That the mountains might quake at Thy presence—  
As when fire doth kindle the brushwood,  
And causeth the waters to boil—

## The Return from Exile

To make Thy name known to Thy foes,  
That the nations may tremble before Thee,  
While Thou workest terrors (to the enemy) we  
hoped not for,  
That no man hath heard of old !

Ear hath not heard,  
Eye hath not seen,  
The works and wonders Thou doest  
For them that wait on Thee.  
Would Thou didst meet (with Thy favour) such as  
do right,  
Who remember Thy ways !  
But, behold ! Thou wast wroth, and we sinned—  
Thou wast wroth at our doings, and we fell into  
guilt.

We all are become as a man unclean,  
All our righteous deeds as a garment defiled ;  
We all have faded away like a leaf,  
And our guilt hath swept us off like the wind.  
There is none (among us) that doth call on Thy  
name,  
That rouseth himself to lay hold on Thee<sup>1</sup>:  
For Thou hast hidden Thy face from us,  
And hast handed us over to the power of our sins.

But now, Jehovah, Thou art our Father,  
And all of us are Thy children ;

<sup>1</sup> "An easily intelligible hyperbole" (Skinner).

## The Faith of Isaiah

Thou art our Potter, and we the clay,  
Even all of us are the work of Thy hand.  
Be not wroth, then, O Lord, overmuch,  
And remember not guilt for ever !  
Behold, look, we beseech Thee ;  
For we are all Thy people !  
Thy holy cities are become a wilderness,  
Jerusalem is a desolation ;  
Our holy and beautiful house,  
Where our fathers praised Thee,  
Is become a brand of fire,  
And all our pleasant places are laid waste.  
And for these things, O Lord, wilt Thou restrain  
Thyself ;  
Wilt Thou hold Thy peace, and afflict us very  
much ? ” (lxiv. 1-12).

## CHAPTER XV

### THE NEW JERUSALEM

THE prayer that Jehovah would rend the heavens, and come down, was answered by another of those kaleidoscopic changes in Eastern history in which prophetic spirits saw clearly the hand of the living God.

Cyrus died in 529 B.C., and was succeeded by his wild and reckless son, Cambyzes "the mad." His victories in Egypt were unable to undo the evil effects of his cruelty and caprice, and the brilliant achievements of Cyrus seemed destined to swift ruin, when in 522 Cambyzes committed suicide, throwing the prize of empire open to the strongest hand. After a few months' usurpation by the ignoble Gaumata, who pretended to be Smerdis or Barada, the second son of Cyrus, the reins were seized by Darius, son of Hystaspes, the ablest and noblest born of living Persians (521). His accession was hotly disputed, and insurrections broke out in most of the provinces. The Jews, however, were conspicuous for their loyalty to the new monarch,

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and this naturally predisposed him in their favour. Thus a new enthusiasm for Jerusalem swept over them, and under the inspiration of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and the practical leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, they gave themselves to the work of restoration, with such success that in 516 the building of the Temple was completed, and the ancient rites were resumed with a great feast of dedication (Ezra vi.). But the new age foretold by the prophets delayed its coming. The hopes they had centred in Zerubbabel were frustrated, and the Jews remained a subject people, hard pressed by their adversaries, and with little promise for the future. Jerusalem looked the mere shadow of its former self, while the Temple was an object of contempt to the neighbours. Under these various disappointments the zeal of the people rapidly cooled. They became remiss in their service, withholding the tithes, and bringing to Jehovah's altar the poorest and sickliest of their flocks (Mal. i. 6ff.). Many of them even abandoned the pure faith of their fathers, and adopted the worldly ways of the nations around them, setting their hearts on gain instead of goodness and mercy, defrauding the hireling of his wages, doing injustice to the widow, the fatherless and the stranger, and even cruelly divorcing "the wives of their youth" for the daughters of the Gentiles among whom they dwelt (ii. 1ff.). Nor did any ill befall them for their



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apostasy. Indeed, it seemed as if those most loyal to their faith had to bear the burden of the people's guilt, while "every one that did evil was accepted as good in the eyes of Jehovah, and He delighted in them" (ii. 17; *cf.* iii. 14).

The crisis called for a prophet, and about the year 460 B.C.—just before Ezra's first visit to Jerusalem—the word of the Lord came through Malachi. In simple, forceful prose, resembling the dialectical style of the Rabbi or teacher, he pressed home the three fundamental principles of Israel's religion—the love of Jehovah for His people, His transcendent holiness or majesty, and His inflexible righteousness—and summoned them to bring their lives into harmony with His will, by offering Him the service of a pure and reverent worship, combined with respect for the common moralities of life, honesty in the law-courts and the market-place, faithfulness to the marriage bond, and kindly regard for the poor and lonely, the widow, the fatherless and the stranger, inasmuch as all had one Father in God—assuring such as feared His name that the clouds would soon break and the sun of righteousness arise "with healing in its wings," and on that day they should "skip as calves of the stall," while the wicked would be burned up, root and branch, and be trodden as ashes beneath the soles of their feet.

Essentially the same ideals are upheld in the radiant chapters, Isa. lvi.-lxvi., which are now

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recognised as belonging to the same age of disillusionment, scepticism and apostasy.<sup>1</sup>

In feeling and imagination the chapters may still remind us of the prophecy of Comfort. The style, however, is imitative rather than original, while in other respects the work is secondary and derivative. The historical background, too, points unmistakably to the time of Malachi. The darkness of the Exile has been dispelled, and the people of Jehovah can once more worship Him in the Temple. But they are plunged in deep disquietude and depression because of the evil that prevails. Their spiritual watchmen, the priests and prophets, are blind and senseless, unable to give heed to truth and righteousness: they are all “dumb dogs, which cannot bark,” but lie down and dream, “loving to slumber,” save when they fetch themselves wine and are filled with strong drink, so greedy of appetite that they can never have enough (lvi. 10ff.). Thus the beasts of the field and jungle—the jealous nations surrounding Judah—are continually breaking through the fences and devouring them. Even under the shadow of the Holy Place grave disorders reign.

“The righteous man perisheth,  
Yet no one layeth it to heart ;

<sup>1</sup> On the question of Trito-Isaiah, cf. recent commentaries like Skinner, II. pp.xli. ff. ; Wade, pp. lxxvii. ff. ; or Cheyne's monumental *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*, pp. 310ff. The chapters hang somewhat loosely together, and were probably composed at intervals—though by the same author—within a few years of the Reform under Ezra and Nehemiah.

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And godly men are swept away,

Yet none regardeth it.

By reason of the evil (of the times) the righteous  
is swept away,

He entereth into peace ;

They rest upon their beds,<sup>1</sup>

Who have walked straight-forward," (lvii. 1f.)—

while their godless oppressors make sport of them, opening wide their mouths, and shooting out the tongue, in contempt alike of their piety and of their unmerited fate (vv. 3f.). The land, too, is full of the grossest superstition and idolatry. Men build their altars and offer sacrifice to Moloch, Gad and Meni—the gods of Fortune and Destiny—"under every green tree," and in valleys "under the cleft of the rocks" (vv. 5ff.).<sup>2</sup> They likewise indulge in all manner of abominable rites in secret gardens and among the graves ; they "eat swine's flesh," and prepare their magical hell-broth in consecrated vessels, charging themselves with the "holiness" of the gods they worship (lxv. 3ff.).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The "peace" here is the peace of death, and the "beds" are graves.

<sup>2</sup> The paganism alluded to is usually identified with the half-heathen worship of the Samaritans, but it was prevalent also in the popular religion of Israel, both before and after the Exile. A flood of light has recently been shed on the subject from the Assouan papyri, with their open acknowledgement of Baal, Nebo, Melcarth, and various other gods alongside of Jehovah. Cf. J. M. P. Smith, "Jewish Religious Life in the Fifth Century B.C.," in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages*, July 1917, pp. 322ff.

<sup>3</sup> The prophet here alludes to the mystical forms of worship that were widespread over the Eastern world in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, and affected the faith of Israel as early as the times of Ezekiel (cf.

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Even where the purer faith is maintained, religion is too often divorced from morality. Men draw near to Jehovah, and keep His fasts and ordinances—but for their own comfort and glory. Of their debtors they relentlessly exact the pledge, while for the poor, the hungry and the oppressed they have no room in their thoughts (lviii. 3f.). Their hands are defiled with blood, and their fingers with iniquity; their lips have spoken lies, and their tongue muttered wickedness. They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. And yet they ask why salvation is still so far away; why they should look for light, and behold darkness, for brightness, and they must walk in obscurity (lix. 3ff.).

The prophet is as insistent as Malachi that true devotion of heart and life is the only way of salvation. At the very outset he strikes this note clear and strong. Jehovah's salvation is near to come, and His righteousness about to be revealed; but they alone shall taste the happiness of redemption who "observe judgment and practise righteousness,"<sup>1</sup> even such as "keep the Sabbath from profaning it,

Ezek. viii. 7ff.). The intention of the rites was to reach a closer communion with the gods than the ordinary worship afforded (*cf.* W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 289ff., 357ff.). The opening words of ver. 5 should be rendered, "Stand off, come not near me, lest I sanctify thee," *i.e.* infect thee with the "holiness" or *taboo* that comes from participation in the rites.

<sup>1</sup> In this context "judgment" applies specifically to the Divine statutes of religion (Sabbath-keeping and the like), "righteousness" to just conduct towards one's neighbour. In the other part of the verse it is the co-relative of salvation (*see* p. 155, n. 1).



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and keep their hands from doing any evil " (lvi. 1f.). Given but fidelity to Jehovah and His righteousness, there is no limit to salvation. The eunuch who keeps the Sabbath and chooses the things that please God, and the stranger from whatsoever nation who joins himself to Jehovah and loves His name and service, shall be granted an inheritance in His house " better than that of sons and daughters," and a name among His redeemed ones " that shall not be cut off " (vv. 3f.). For in the brighter days at hand the Temple of Jehovah shall be no sanctuary for Jews alone, but " shall be called an house of prayer for all the peoples " (ver. 7). As for the down-trodden servants of Jehovah, who have held fast to His name through all darkness and oppression, let them lift up their eyes in hope, for already the light is breaking in the East.

“ Cast up, cast up, level the way,  
Remove the stumbling-block from the path of  
my people ;  
For thus saith the High and Exalted One,  
That dwelleth (enthroned) for ever, whose name  
is Holy :  
I dwell on high as the Holy One,  
And with him that is broken and bowed in spirit,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ It is the paradox of religion that Jehovah’s holiness, which places Him at an infinite distance from human pride and greatness, brings Him near to the humble in spirit ” (Skinner). Cf. Ps. cxiii. 5f., cxxxviii. 6.



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To revive the spirit of the bowed,  
And to revive the heart of the broken ;  
For not for ever will I strive (with My people),  
And not continually be wroth—  
Else the spirit would faint before Me,  
Even the souls which I have made.<sup>1</sup>

For his sin was I wroth for a moment,  
And I smote him, while I hid myself in wrath.  
He walked rebelliously in the way of his heart,  
And I saw his ways, saith Jehovah.  
But now will I heal him, and cause him to rest,  
And requite him with consolations.  
For his mourners create I the fruit of the lips—  
Peace, peace, to far and near.<sup>2</sup>  
But the wicked are like the uptossed sea,  
For it cannot rest ;  
And its waters toss up mire and filth—  
No peace, saith my God, for the wicked ”  
(lvii. 14-21).

In Jehovah's sight fasting and Sabbath-keeping are no substitute for contrition of heart. It is vain for men to seek Him daily and ask for righteous ordinances—" as a nation that doeth righteousness,

<sup>1</sup> " Hardly less remarkable is the motive here assigned for the Divine clemency—Jehovah's compassion for the frailty of His creatures " (Skinner). Cf. Amos vii. 2ff. ; Ps. ciii. 13f.

<sup>2</sup> The pronouns in this context refer to Israel, the " near " being those already brought back to their mother-land, the " far " those still in exile. The " fruit of the lips " is obviously praise and gratitude for their deliverance.

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and forsaketh not the law of its God"—if they use His ordinances to further their own profit, assuming the cloak of religion to "oppress all their labourers," and fasting "for strife and contention, and to smite the poor with the fist" (lviii. 1ff.). Such fasting cannot "make their voice to be heard on high" (ver. 4). In a tone of irony that recalls Amos, the prophet turns upon them :

"Is such the fast I choose—

A day for a man to mortify himself,  
To bow down his head like a bulrush,  
To grovel in sackcloth and ashes ?

Wilt thou call this a fast,

A day of pleasure to Jehovah ?" (lviii. 5)

The true fast, on the contrary, is a day of mercy and brotherly kindness.

"Is not this the fast I choose,

Saith Jehovah the Lord—

To loosen the bonds of wickedness,

And undo the cords of violence ;

To let the oppressed go free,

And every yoke to snap ;

To deal thy bread to the hungry,

And the homeless to bring to thy home ;

When thou seest the naked, to cover him,

And to hide not thyself from thy flesh<sup>1</sup> ? "

(vv. 6f.)

<sup>1</sup> The "flesh" is, of course, one's fellow-Israelites (*cf.* Neh. v. 5).

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If such be the fasts they keep, healing will soon return to them, and Jehovah will lead them into fulness of light and joy.

“ Then shall thy light break forth as the dawn,  
And thy healing<sup>1</sup> shall spring forth speedily ;  
And thy right shall go before thee,  
And the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rearguard.  
Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer,  
Thou shalt cry, and He will say, ‘ Here am I.’  
If thou wilt remove from thy midst the yoke,  
The shooting of finger, and mischievous speech,  
And wilt share thy bread with the hungry,  
And sate the afflicted soul,  
Then shall thy light stream forth in the darkness,  
And thy murk shall be as noonday,  
And Jehovah shall guide thee continually,  
And shall sate thy soul in drought ;  
And thy strength will He renew,  
And thou shalt be as a watered garden,  
And thy life like a bubbling spring,  
Whose waters fail not.  
And thy sons shall rebuild the ancient wastes,  
The foundations of many generations shalt thou  
upraise ;  
And thou shalt be called the Repairer of the breach,  
The Restorer of ruins as a dwelling-place ”  
(vv. 8-12).

<sup>1</sup> The “ healing ” is literally the new flesh formed when the wound is healing.

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It is not because Jehovah's ears are too dull to hear, or His hand too short to reach them, that the hour of salvation drags: their own sins are the barrier that restrains Him, the veil that obscures His face (lix. 1ff.). If only they will confess their sins, He will come down like a man of war, arrayed in righteousness as a coat of mail and salvation as the helmet upon His head, with vengeance as His garment and the fury of battle as His cloak, to recompense His enemies according to their deserts, and to bring deliverance to His people (vv. 15ff.). Then shall the whole world see His glory sweeping from East to West like a pent-up flood (ver. 19), or breaking like the sun at dawn, heralding the day of eternal light.

“ Arise, shine ! for thy light is come,  
And the glory of Jehovah hath risen upon thee.  
For lo ! darkness doth cover the earth,  
And gross darkness the peoples ;  
But over thee Jehovah doth rise,  
And His glory appeareth upon thee ;  
And nations shall come to thy light,  
And kings to the gleam of thy rising.

Lift up thine eyes around about, and behold !  
All of them gather and come to thee—  
From afar come thy sons,  
And thy daughters are borne on the side.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “ Borne on the side ” (or hip), the common Eastern way of carrying young children.

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Thou shalt see, and be radiant,  
And thy heart shall throb and swell (with joy),  
For to thee shall be turned the wealth of the deep,  
The riches of nations shall come unto thee.

A stream of camels shall cover thee,  
The young camels of Midian and Ephah ;  
All those of Sheba shall come,  
They shall bring frankincense and gold ;  
All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to thee,  
The rams of Nebaioth shall eagerly seek thee ;  
They shall mount thine altar as a well-pleasing  
sacrifice,  
And my house of prayer shall be glorified.

Who are these, now, that fly as a cloud,  
Or like doves to their windows ?  
'Tis the ships a-gathering for me,  
And foremost the galleons of Tarshish—  
To bring thy sons from afar,  
Their silver and gold with them,  
For the name of Jehovah thy God, the Holy One  
of Israel,  
Because He hath glorified thee.

And aliens shall build thy walls,  
And their kings shall serve thee ;  
For, though in my wrath I smote thee,  
In my favour have I had compassion on thee.



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And thy gates shall be open continually,  
Day and night shall they not be closed,  
That the riches of nations may be brought unto thee,  
Their kings as leaders.

The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee,  
The cypress, the pine, and the box together,  
To adorn the place of my sanctuary,  
And make my footstool<sup>1</sup> glorious.  
And the sons of thine oppressors shall come bending  
to thee,  
Even all that despised thee shall bow at the soles  
of thy feet ;  
And thou shalt be called the City of Jehovah,  
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Whereas thou hast been forsaken,  
And hated, that none passed through thee,  
I will make thee a glory for ever,  
The joy of many generations.  
Thou shalt drain the milk of the nations,  
Even the breast of kings shalt thou suck ;  
And thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour,  
The Mighty One of Israel thy Redeemer.

For brass will I bring gold,  
And for iron will I bring silver ;  
And Peace will I make thy government,  
And Righteousness thy rule.

<sup>1</sup> The Temple is conceived as Jehovah's "footstool," because here He touches the earth most closely.

## The Faith of Isaiah

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land,  
Rapine nor ruin within thy borders ;  
But thy walls shalt thou call Salvation,  
And thy gates Renown.

No more shall the sun be thy light by day,  
Nor the moon for brightness illumine thee ;  
But Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light,  
And thy God thy glory.

Thy sun shall no more go down,  
Nor shall thy moon withdraw itself ;  
For Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light,  
And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

And thy people shall be all of them righteous,  
And shall inherit the land for ever,  
As a scion of Jehovah's planting,  
The work of His hands, that He may be glorified.  
Then the small one shall become a clan,  
Even the least a mighty nation ;  
I, Jehovah, have spoken the word,  
In its time will I hasten it " (lx. 1-22).

Under the inspiration of this glorious hope the prophet himself is caught up, and speaks as the Messenger of Jehovah, to whom is entrusted the Gospel of great joy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In contrast with the "Servant" of II. Isaiah, the Messenger does not mediate, but only proclaims, the coming salvation. This prophecy also Jesus fulfilled by His fidelity to its real spirit and purpose. It is noticeable, in this respect, that in His reading of the passage He stopped short at the reference to the "day of vengeance" in ver. 2 (Luke iv. 19).

## The New Jerusalem

“ The spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me,  
For Jehovah hath anointed me :  
He hath sent me to bring good tidings to the lowly,  
To bind the broken in heart,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And release to them that are bound—  
To proclaim the year of Jehovah’s favour,  
And the day of vengeance of our God—  
To comfort all that mourn,  
To give them laurel<sup>1</sup> for ashes,  
The oil of joy for the garment of mourning,  
Praise for a fainting spirit ;  
That they may be called oak-trees of righteousness,  
The planting of Jehovah, that He may be  
glorified.

And they shall rebuild the ancient wastes,  
Shall upraise the ruins of former days ;  
They shall renew the wasted cities,  
The ruins of many generations.  
And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,  
Aliens shall be your ploughmen and your vine-  
dressers ;  
But ye shall be called the priests of Jehovah,  
The ministers of our God shall ye be named.  
Ye shall eat the riches of nations,  
And with their glory shall ye adorn yourselves.

<sup>1</sup> Literally, “ an ornamented head-tire.” Box renders the play by “ a coronal instead of a coronach.”

## The Faith of Isaiah

Because their shame was double,<sup>1</sup>  
And abuse was the lot they inherited,  
So now in their land shall they inherit double—  
Everlasting joy shall be theirs.

For I, Jehovah, love justice,  
I hate robbery with unrighteousness ;  
Therefore in truth will I give them their recompense,  
And an everlasting covenant will I make with  
them.

And their seed shall be known among the nations,  
Their offspring in the midst of the peoples ;  
All that see them shall acknowledge them,  
That they are the seed which Jehovah hath  
blessed.<sup>2</sup>

For, as the earth putteth forth her shoots,  
And a garden maketh its seed to sprout,  
So Jehovah the Lord shall cause righteousness to  
shoot,  
And praise before all nations.

For Zion's sake will I not keep silent,  
And for Jerusalem will I not rest,  
Till her righteousness goeth forth as light,  
And her salvation as a burning torch.

<sup>1</sup> That is, the shame they endured at the hands of the nations was double what they deserved for their sins. Cf. xl. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ver. 10 is clearly out of place in this context, and should probably be inserted at the close of ch. lxiii.

## The New Jerusalem

Then the nations shall see thy righteousness,<sup>1</sup>  
And all kings thy glory ;  
Thou shalt likewise be called by a new name,  
Which the mouth of the Lord shall determine ;  
And a crown of beauty shalt thou be in the hand  
of the Lord,  
A royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

No more shalt thou be called Azubah (Forsaken),  
Nor thy land Shomemah (Desolate) ;  
But thou shalt be called Hephzibah (My delight is  
in her),  
And thy land Beulah (Married).  
For Jehovah delighteth in thee,  
And thy land shall be married.  
Even as a young man marrieth a maiden,  
Thy Builder shall marry thee ;  
And as bridegroom rejoiceth over bride,  
Thy God shall rejoice over thee" (lxi. 1-lxii. 5).

Jehovah can never forget Zion. Over her walls He has set guardian angels, who play the part also of heavenly "remembrancers," giving Him no rest until He shall have established the city in glory, and made it the praise of all the earth (lxii. 6f.). He has Himself sworn by His strong right arm that His people shall no more be the spoil of their enemies, but shall eat their bread and drink their wine in

<sup>1</sup> *Righteousness* is here used in the sense of "vindication."



## The Faith of Isaiah

peace (vv. 8f.). Already He has proclaimed the coming salvation "to the end of the earth" (vv. 10-12), and even now He is seen sweeping from Edom<sup>1</sup>—His garments crimson with the blood of the enemies He has trampled in the wine-press of His fury—to bring deliverance to the captives and break their oppressors in pieces (lxiii. 1-6).<sup>2</sup> On this day of redemption the faithless and the idolators shall be cut off from the midst of the people (lxv. 1-7), but the true Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

"Thus saith Jehovah :

As the must is found in the cluster,  
And one saith, 'Destroy it not !

For a blessing is in it ;'<sup>3</sup>

So will I do for my servants' sake,

That I may not destroy the whole.

I will bring out of Jacob a seed,

From Judah an heir to my mountains ;

And my chosen shall inherit the land,

My servants shall dwell therein.

<sup>1</sup> Edom was conspicuously associated with Divine appearances, both in early and late times (*cf.* Judg. v. 4 ; Is. xxxiv. 5f. ; Obad. 1ff.). There is, no doubt, also a play of words between Edom and "red," Bozrah and "vintage." Some scholars, indeed, alter the text of ver. 1 to read :

"Who is this that cometh all reddened,  
His garments crimsoned more than a vintager's ?"

<sup>2</sup> On lxiii. 7-lxiv. 12 see pp. 201ff.

<sup>3</sup> These are probably the first lines of an old vintage-song, the tune of which is alluded to in Ps. lvii., lviii., lix., lxxv.

## The New Jerusalem

And Sharon shall be a pasture for flocks,  
And the valley of Achor a lair for cattle."  
(lxv. 8-10).

Then shall the former troubles be forgotten, and every one in the land shall acknowledge Jehovah as the God of truth.

"For behold! I create new heavens  
And a new earth;  
And the former things shall not be remembered,  
Nor come into mind;  
But men shall rejoice and exult for ever  
In what I create.  
For behold! I create Jerusalem an exultation,  
And her people a joy;  
And I will exult in Jerusalem,  
And rejoice in my people;  
And no more shall be heard in her the sound of  
weeping,  
Nor the sound of crying.  
No more shall there go from thence  
An infant of days,  
Or an old man that doth not complete  
His tale of days;  
But the youngest of all shall die  
An hundred years old.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the glad days to come there will be no premature death; even an hundred years will be counted but a short span of life. The final clause suggests that even that age is premature, and a sign of God's displeasure; but the prosaic quality of the remark, and the discord it introduces into the music of the prophecy, stamp it as a later intrusion.

## The Faith of Isaiah

And they shall build houses, and inhabit them,  
And shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of  
them ;  
They shall not build, and another inhabit,  
Nor plant, and another eat ;  
For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my  
people,  
And the work of their hands shall my chosen  
enjoy to the end.  
They shall not labour in vain,  
Nor bring forth children for destruction ;  
For they are a seed of Jehovah's blessed ones,  
And their offspring shall be with them.<sup>1</sup>  
Then, before ever they call, I will answer ;  
While they yet speak, I will hear.  
The wolf and the lamb shall pasture together,  
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox ;  
They shall not hurt nor destroy  
On all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah"  
(vv. 17-25).

The present sufferings are but the travail-pangs of Zion, and He who has brought to the birth will give her a mother's joy in full measure (lxvi. 7-9). Her children also will find in her bosom rich and abiding delight.

“ Rejoice with Jerusalem, and exult in her,  
All ye that love her !

<sup>1</sup> That is, many generations will live on together, untouched by death.

## The New Jerusalem

Joy joyfully with her,

All ye that mourned for her !

That ye may suck, and be satisfied,

From the breast of her consolations ;

That ye may drink, and delight yourselves,

From her rich mother-bosom.

For behold ! I extend to her peace like a river,

And the splendour of nations like a sweeping  
torrent ;

Her sucklings also shall be borne on the side,

And fondled on the knees.

And as one whom his mother doth comfort,

So shall ye be comforted in Jerusalem ;

And when ye see it, your heart shall rejoice,

And your bones shall flourish like spring grass ”

(lxvi. 10-14).

While the hand of Jehovah thus rests in mercy upon Jerusalem, His wrath goes out in judgment against His enemies, the heathen and the schismatical, whose worship is no better than murder and impurity (vv. 1ff.).<sup>1</sup> Like the whirlwind His chariots descend on them ; as tongues of fire His arrows smite them, while His sword hews them in pieces (vv. 15ff.). When judgment is accomplished, all the nations shall be gathered to see the revelation of Jehovah's glory in Zion, and they shall bring with them the scattered exiles of Israel, as a freewill

<sup>1</sup> By the schismatics he probably means the Samaritans, who built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim.

## The Faith of Isaiah

offering to God on His holy mountain. Thus the seed and fame of Jerusalem shall continue for ever, a blessing to all the nations.

“ For behold ! the time is come

To gather all nations and tongues ;

They shall come, and shall see my glory,

And a sign will I set among them.

And of these will I send the escaped (of the judgment)

To the distant isles,

That have heard not my name,

Nor seen my glory.<sup>1</sup>

And they shall declare my glory among the nations,

And they shall bring all your brothers from all the peoples,

For an oblation to Jehovah on my holy mountain,

Even Jerusalem, saith the Lord—

As the children of Israel bring oblation

In a clean vessel to the house of the Lord.

And of these too will I take

To be Levite priests, saith Jehovah.

For as the new heavens,

And the new earth that I do make,

Continue before me, saith Jehovah,

So shall your seed and your name continue”

(vv. 18-21).

<sup>1</sup> That is, the nations nearer to Jerusalem, who first see the glory of Jehovah, will send missionaries to the more distant peoples, to share with them the blessings they rejoice in.



## CHAPTER XVI

### LIFE FROM THE DEAD

THE vision of the New Jerusalem is already tinged with the colouring of Apocalypse, in which the redemption of Israel is set on a fiery background of wrath and judgment. This influence is still more marked in various prophecies against the nations which in all likelihood belong to the same general period of Persian domination. Over Moab the avenging hosts of the Lord sweep like a tornado, smiting down the men at arms and laying waste the fields and vineyards, so that "all joy is withdrawn" from the land, and the prophet's own bowels "sound like a harp" for its fate (chs. xv., xvi.). On a swift cloud Jehovah Himself descends upon Egypt, confounding the spirit of its princes, setting city at variance with city and kingdom with kingdom, delivering the people into the hand of "a cruel lord," drying up also the waters of the Nile, and making all work to cease (xix. 1-17). The proud commercial city of Tyre, "whose merchants were princes and its traders the honoured of the earth," is likewise touched by the rod of Jehovah's wrath,

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flung from her fortress on the sea, and left like a "harlot forgotten" (ch. xxiii.). On Edom also descends the sword of Almighty Justice, drunk with heavenly fury, to drench the whole land in blood, and make it a place of burning pitch, "that shall not be quenched for ever," a waste inhabited only by the "pelican and bittern," the owl and raven, "the wild beasts of the desert," the jackal and ostrich, the wolf and satyr and night-hag (ch. xxxiv.). Israel itself is not exempt from the ordeal. The bloodstains of Jerusalem must be purged from the midst thereof "by the blast of judgment and the blast of burning," until none are left but such as are called holy, "even every one that is written for life"—those whose names are inscribed on the book of life—"in Jerusalem" (iv. 3f.). The "sinners in Zion" must pass through the flames, every evil life and deed being consumed by "the devouring fire," and he alone able to dwell securely amid the "everlasting burnings" of God's holiness "that walketh in righteousness and speaketh truth, that despiseth gain won by acts of oppression, that shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shutteth his eyes from looking on evil" (xxxiii. 13ff.). But when the storm of judgment is past, Zion rises from her agony "a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, whose stakes shall never be plucked up, and none of whose cords shall be broken"

## Life from the Dead

(ver. 20). No more need shall she have to envy Egypt her Nile-streams and her lordly galleys ; for the River of God shall be in her, and He shall be her Judge and Law-giver, her King and Saviour (vv. 21f.). Over the whole sacred site of Mount Zion He will brood "as a cloud of smoke by day and a brightly shining flame of fire by night," and His glory shall be "a canopy and pavilion, a shade from the heat, a refuge and shelter from storm and rain" (iv. 5f.). On that day the tumultuous hordes of the enemy shall vanish like a dream or "vision of the night" (xxix. 7f.). For as a mother-bird hovereth over her nest, so will He hover over Jerusalem ; as a lion defendeth his prey against "the whole band of shepherds," so will He defend Jerusalem against all that assail her (xxxi. 4f.). Then shall the "remnant of Israel" stay themselves no more on those that smote them, but on Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and on Him alone (x. 20f.). And He shall give them rest from all their sorrow and trouble, even all the "hard service" they were made to serve (xiv. 3). On that day He shall be as "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people"—the source also of all their wisdom and strength—"a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment and a tower of strength unto them that turn back the battle towards the gate" (xxviii. 5f.). Quickened by this same spirit, the deaf shall hear the "words

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of the book,"<sup>1</sup> and the eyes of the blind shall be opened to see through obscurity and darkness. "The meek also shall find fresh joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall exult in the Holy One of Israel." Even the dullest, the most wilful and perverse, shall learn obedience to Him. "They that err in spirit shall get understanding, and they that murmur shall learn instruction" (xxix. 18ff.). And the sound of weeping shall no more be heard in Jerusalem.

"Thou people in Zion, that dwellest in Jerusalem,  
Of a surety shalt thou weep no more ;  
Right graciously will He deal with thee at the sound  
of thy crying :  
So soon as He hears will He answer thee.

If the Lord (in time past) hath given you  
Bread of distress and water of affliction,  
No more will thy Teacher withdraw Himself,  
But thine eyes shall continually behold thy  
Teacher.<sup>2</sup>

And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee,  
The voice of thy Counsellor, saying,  
'This is the way ; walk in it !'  
When ye turn to right or left.

<sup>1</sup> The "book" is doubtless that referred to in vv. 11ff., which is "sealed" both to learned and unlearned.

<sup>2</sup> The Teacher is Jehovah Himself ; and the "word" of counsel in the next stanza is likewise that of Jehovah.

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And thou shalt defile thy graven images o'erlaid with  
silver,

And thy molten images plated with gold ;  
Thou shalt straw them abroad as a thing unclean,  
Thou shalt say to them, ' Get ye hence ! '

Then will He give thee rain for thy seed,  
That thou mayest sow the ground,  
And bread-corn as the produce of the ground,  
Full of fatness and marrow.

In that day shall thy cattle also feed in broad pastures,  
And the oxen and young asses that till the ground—  
Of salted fodder shall they eat,  
Winnowed with shovel and fan.

And on every lofty mountain and every high hill,  
There shall be rivers flowing with water,  
On the day of the great slaughter,  
When the towers fall.<sup>1</sup>

And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the  
sun,  
And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold,  
On the day that Jehovah doth bind up the wound  
of His people,  
And healeth the hurt they were stricken with "  
(xxx. 19-26).

<sup>1</sup> The "slaughter" is that of Israel's enemies, which is part of the scenic background of Apocalypse.



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But the joy of redemption is not for Jerusalem alone. The pall that lies over the Northland also shall be removed, "and there shall be no more gloom to her that is in distress." As in former times "He brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali," so in these days "He shall make it glorious, all along the way of the Sea, beyond Jordan, even the circuit of the nations" (ix. 1).<sup>1</sup> The old jealousies of Ephraim and Judah shall now be forgotten, and together they shall swoop down upon their enemies on every side (xi. 13f.), and bring them as trembling captives to be their servants (xiv. 1f.). Then shall Jehovah raise a signal to the nations for the return of the exiles from all the lands to which they were scattered (xi. 11ff.); and they shall stream back to Palestine, drawing water with joy "out of the wells of salvation" (xii. 3), and singing glad songs of thanksgiving, to refresh and strengthen themselves on the journey.<sup>2</sup>

"I will praise Thee, O Lord,  
For Thou wast angry with me;  
But Thine anger is turned away,  
And Thou comfortest me.

<sup>1</sup> The "way of the sea" is probably that leading from Damascus towards the Mediterranean. The district here defined thus comprises the land of Galilee, with Gilead beyond Jordan. "The prophecy," says Skinner, "acquired a new and surprising significance when the 'good news of the Kingdom' began to be proclaimed by our Lord first in Galilee" (*Isaiah*, I. p. 80).

<sup>2</sup> Chapter xii. consists of two separate songs, one from the mouth of the personified community, and the other from the lips of individual members, with ver. 3 as a connecting link.

## Life from the Dead

Behold ! God is my salvation,  
I will trust, and not be afraid ;  
For Jehovah is my strength and song,  
And He is become my salvation”  
(xii. 1f.).

“ Give thanks to the Lord,  
Call on His name ;  
Make known His deeds ’mong the peoples,  
Proclaim that His name is exalted.

Sing to the Lord,  
For proudly hath He wrought ;  
Let this be known  
Through all the earth !

Cry aloud, and shout,  
Ye dwellers in Zion ;  
For great in thy midst  
Is the Holy One of Israel ” (vv. 4-6).

With the return of the exiles the Messianic age will have dawned. The eyes of men shall be cheered by the sight of “ the King in his beauty,” ruling over “ a land of far distances ”—a realm of illimitable horizons (xxxiii. 17).<sup>1</sup> Under his gracious influence sickness, sorrow and sin shall be removed, the lion and every ravenous beast shall disappear, the land shall be carpeted with flowers, and the

<sup>1</sup> The allusion here is to the ever-widening extension of the Messianic kingdom (cf. ix. 7 ; Micah. v. 4 ; Ps. lxxii. 8).

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highways to Zion shall be centres of peace and security, over which pilgrim-bands of Jehovah's redeemed ones shall pass with the crown of "everlasting joy" upon their heads.

"The wilderness and the parched land shall rejoice  
The desert shall exult and blossom ;  
Like the crocus shall it blossom abundantly,  
It shall exult with exultation and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given it,  
The splendour of Carmel and Sharon ;  
And these<sup>1</sup> shall see the glory of Jehovah,  
The splendour of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
And the tottering knees make firm ;  
Say unto them that are fearful of heart,  
'Be strong, fear not !

Behold, your God !  
With vengeance He cometh ;  
His recompense cometh,  
He cometh to save you.'

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened,  
And the ears of the deaf be unstopped ;  
Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,  
And the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

<sup>1</sup> By "these" the poet means the disheartened Jews for whose strengthening he appeals in vv. 3f.

## Life from the Dead

For waters shall break out in the wilderness,  
And rivers in the desert ;  
And the glowing sand shall become a pool,  
And the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals and wild cats  
Your flocks shall lay them down ;  
And the lodging-place of ostriches  
Shall be filled with reeds and rushes.

And there shall be an highway—  
The Holy Way shall it be called—  
No unclean one shall pass thereon,<sup>1</sup>  
No fools shall wander along it.

No lion shall be there,  
No ravenous beast shall go up thither ;  
But the redeemed shall walk in it.  
And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return by it.

They shall come with singing to Zion,  
Everlasting joy upon their heads ;  
Gladness and joy shall o'ertake them,  
While sorrow and sighing shall flee away "  
(xxxv. 1-10).

Still loftier heights are reached in the soaring apocalyptic visions of chapters xxiv.-xxvii., which probably date from the time of national upheaval

<sup>1</sup> An explanatory gloss adds, " But it shall be for His (Jehovah's) people as they walk on the way " (*i.e.*, go on pilgrimage).

## The Faith of Isaiah

inaugurated by the campaigns of Alexander the Great against Persia in 334-30 B.C.

The curtain rises on the usual background of judgment passed upon all the earth for the crimes of its inhabitants. Jehovah doth empty it out like a basin ; then He turneth it upside down, and scattereth its inhabitants to the winds. Ruin falls equally on people and priest, master and servant, mistress and maid, buyer and seller, taker and giver of interest ; for all are under the same curse, and all share the same guilt. Their cities are shattered, their homes left desolate, the fruits of the ground blasted, and themselves diminished in numbers, “ as when olive trees are beaten, or at gleanings, when vintage is over ” (xxiv. 1-13). Already, indeed, the prophet can hear in the distance loud songs of praise to Jehovah, proclaiming the day of salvation ; but meantime all around him is darkness and distress.

“ Terror and pit and snare

Be upon you, dwellers on earth !

And he that fleeth from terror shall fall on the pit,

And he that escapes from the pit shall be caught  
in the snare.

For the windows on high are opened,

And the roots of the earth do shake ;

The earth is utterly broken,

Is split to the heart, and uptossed.



## Life from the Dead

The earth doth reel as a drunkard,  
And is swayed to and fro like a hammock ;  
The transgression of earth lies heavy thereon,  
And it falleth, to rise no more ”

(vv. 17-20).

In this sublime oracle judgment strikes not merely the kings and princes of the earth. Jehovah will visit also “ the host of the height on high ”—the rebellious powers of heaven<sup>1</sup>—gathering them together, “ as prisoners are gathered in the dungeon,” to await the day of vengeance when the sun and moon shall be abased before the radiance of His glory, and He shall stand forth as King on Mount Zion, revealing His grace to the elders of His people. But the sweep of God’s mercy is as universal as His judgment. On the day when His light breaks over Jerusalem, He shall remove the veil from the face of all nations, and they shall sit down with Him at His coronation feast, and shall enjoy the bliss of His presence for ever.

“ Then Jehovah of Hosts will make for all peoples  
A feast of fat things, of wine on the lees,  
Fat things full of marrow, wine on lees well  
refined.

<sup>1</sup> These rebellious powers are most probably the patron angels of the hostile nations (*cf.* Dan. x. 13, 20f.).

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Then will He rend on this mountain<sup>1</sup>  
The veil that veileth all peoples,  
And the web that is woven upon all nations.  
He hath swallowed up death for ever,  
And will wipe the tears from all faces,<sup>2</sup>  
And the reproach of His people remove from the  
earth :  
For Jehovah hath spoken ” (xxv. 6-8).

Here the hope of salvation is not merely universalised, but thrown forward also into the Eternal. With sin and sorrow, Death vanishes before the light of God's redemption, and the King of terrors yields his sceptre to Him. This significant new departure was destined to play a large part in future visions of the Kingdom, and to contribute a powerful element to the faith of Judaism. Even in the noblest of the Psalms the good man's outlook was bounded by this present earthly sphere. Only a few greatly daring spirits, driven to despair by the insoluble problems of life, had sought refuge in the Hereafter, or fiercely protested against the indignity of death for those who walked in constant fellowship with God. No doubt their heroism of faith had its influence on the thoughtful. But it was the taking up of their hope into the enchanted region of Apocalypse that captivated the heart and imagina-

<sup>1</sup> The mountain is, of course, Jerusalem, which was all along regarded as the capital of the coming Kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup> “ Perhaps no words that ever were uttered have sunk deeper into the aching heart of humanity than this exquisite image of the Divine tenderness ” (Skinner).

## Life from the Dead

tion of the people, and gave to the doctrine of immortality the sure place it held in Jewish belief by the time of our Lord.

With this bold leap into the Eternal the prophecy reaches its climax. There remain, however, a few verses of melting tenderness in which the seer appeals to his people to hide themselves in their chambers till the storm of God's wrath is spent and the trumpet is blown for the exiles to return—"the lost ones in Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt"—when all of them shall at last worship Jehovah their God together "on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem" (xxvi. 2of., xxvii. 1, 12f.). The direct movement of the Apocalypse, moreover, is broken by a series of later outbursts of melody, which endear the chapters even to those blind to their true character and purpose (xxv. 1-5, xxvi. 1-19, xxvii. 2-6, 7-11). Of these lyrical intermezzos the Song of Salvation in ch. xxvi. is a real classic of devotion.

The poet first contrasts the blessedness of Jerusalem, fortified and kept by Jehovah Himself, with the fate of the "lofty city," the capital of the enemy, soon to be trampled down by the feet of the "poor and needy" Jewish people.

"A strong city is ours ;  
For protection He setteth  
Both walls and bulwark.

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Open the gates,  
That the righteous may enter,  
Who keepeth troth !

The stedfast mind  
Thou keepest in peace,  
For he trusteth in Thee.

Trust Jehovah for ever !  
For Jehovah the Lord  
Is a Rock everlasting.

For He hath abased  
The dwellers on high,  
The lofty city.

He bringeth it low,  
Even to the ground,  
He maketh it touch the dust.

The feet of the poor,  
The steps of the needy,  
Shall trample it down" (xxvi. 1-6).

In more subdued and balanced tones the poet now reflects on the general fortunes of good and evil in the world.

"The path of the upright is even,  
The track of the just man Thou smoothest ;

## Life from the Dead

In the path of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we  
sought Thee,

Thy name and memorial are our soul's desire.

With my soul have I desired Thee in the night,

Yea, with my spirit do I seek Thee earnestly ;  
For, when Thy judgments reach down to the earth,  
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Let favour be shown to the wicked,

Yet will not he learn righteousness ;

In the land of uprightness<sup>1</sup> will he deal wrongfully,  
And will not see the majesty of the Lord.

O Lord, Thy hand is exalted,

But Thine enemies see it not ;

Now let them see Thy zeal for Thy people,  
Yea, let fire consume them !

But for us, Lord, ordain Thou peace,

For even all our works hast Thou wrought for us !  
Lords beside Thee have ruled us, O Lord,  
But Thee alone do we mention by name.

The dead come not to life,

The shades rise not ;

So hast Thou visited and destroyed them,  
And made every memorial of them to perish.

<sup>1</sup> The "land of uprightness" is Palestine, with all its holy influences and associations. Even there the wicked work their crooked deeds.



## The Faith of Isaiah

But the nation<sup>1</sup> hast Thou increased,  
The nation hast Thou increased ;  
O Lord, Thou hast made Thyself glorious,  
Thou hast enlarged all the bounds of the land ”  
(vv. 7-15).

The facts of life seem often to give the lie to faith. The righteous suffer and the wicked enjoy long and prosperous years. God Himself remains silent to His people's prayers. Yet faith rests on the eternal promise. Thus at the end the poet rises clear above his doubts to a more assured hope in resurrection and immortal life than any of his fellows had attained.

“ In distress, Lord, we sought Thee,  
We cried through oppression,  
When Thy chastening was on us.

As a woman with child,  
Who is near to give birth,  
And cries out in her pain ;

So were we, Lord, before Thee—  
We travailed and writhed,  
And gave birth to wind !

For the land we wrought no deliverance,  
No dwellers on earth were born (through us) ;

<sup>1</sup> The nation here referred to is Israel, whose future was to be completely different from that of the other nations.

## Life from the Dead

But Thy dead shall come to life,  
Their bodies shall rise.

They that dwell in the dust  
Shall awake and sing out ;  
For Thy dew is the dew of lights,<sup>1</sup>  
And the earth shall bring shades to the birth ”  
(vv. 16-19).

<sup>1</sup> The dew is a supernatural power—the outflow of heavenly light—which touches and quickens the dead, as the earthly dew quickens the flower.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

THE alluring visions of apocalyptic seers did much to strengthen the heart of Israel during the troubled centuries of foreign domination. There was, however, a grave danger in Apocalypse, and the Jews did not wholly escape it. By dwelling on the glorious future that awaited themselves, they tended to forget their missionary obligations, and even allowed their minds to brood with malicious delight on the sufferings to which their enemies were doomed. The Apocalypses of the Old Testament are not free from this spirit, and as we pass beyond the pale of Scripture it becomes greatly accentuated. But other voices were raised to bring the people to worthier thoughts of their own destiny and their relation to the rest of the world. Thus Malachi exalts the heathen nations as more loyal to God's honour than His own peculiar people (Mal. i. 11), while the Christ-like little book of Jonah yearns to extend the salvation which Israel enjoyed even to the most ruthless of its enemies. Borne up by this high impulse of sympathy and love, prophetic spirits rose to the dazzling conception of a world bound together by common faith in Jehovah, dwelling in

## The League of Nations

harmony, and finding its true joy in the furtherance of the universal interests of humanity.

The most radiant utterance is given to this hope in the great vision of the latter days, which has been a lode-star to apostles of peace in all the ages.

“ And it shall come to pass in the end of the days  
That the Mount of Jehovah shall be firmly  
established—

Even the House of our God on the top of the  
mountains,

And uplifted high above all the hills ;

And the nations shall stream to it,

Yea, many peoples shall go and say :

‘ Come, and let us go up to the Mount of Jehovah,  
Even to the House of Jacob’s God,

That He may instruct us out of His ways,

And that we may walk in His paths ;

For out of Zion instruction<sup>1</sup> goes forth,

Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’

Then shall He judge between the nations,

And render decisions for many a people ;

And their swords shall they beat into ploughshares,

And their spears into pruning-hooks ;

Nation shall not lift sword against nation,

And war shall they learn no more ”

(Isa. ii. 2-4 ; *cf.* Micah iv. 2-4.).

<sup>1</sup> *Torah*, “teaching,” practically equivalent to Revelation.

## The Faith of Isaiah

The insight of this prophecy is as deep as its outlook is broad. War may have its place in the Divine drama of history; but the end towards which all moves is peace. God is a God of peace, who desires that His children should live and work together in peace. And the way of peace is no base surrender of justice, but the carrying of its claims to the highest court of appeal—the mind and purpose of God—which is identical with the arbitrament of sound reason, trust and goodwill. “Peace on earth to men of goodwill.” Won by this motive, peace transforms the very instruments of war. The fine qualities that make the Happy Warrior—his courage, serenity, self-sacrificing enthusiasm and resourcefulness—are now directed to the nobler cause of human progress and well-being. His weapons likewise are not left to rust, but turned to productive ends. Thus light issues out of darkness, life out of death.

There is, however, a certain limitation in the prophet's view. He cannot conceive of a kingdom of peace without a visible centre in Jerusalem, to which the nations must stream for instruction in the ways of Jehovah. But this limitation is already transcended in the remarkable passage, Isa. xix. 18-25, where the Jewish colonies in Egypt carry the light of Revelation to the people among whom they sojourn, and Israel, Egypt and Assyria<sup>1</sup> are linked

<sup>1</sup> *Assyria* is here doubtless the Seleucid empire of *Syria*, which did such injury to Israel.



## The League of Nations

by a common bond of faith and brotherhood, worshipping the same God, sharing the same blessing—Egypt as the people of Jehovah, Assyria as the work of His hands, and Israel as His inheritance—and freely communicating that blessing to the world as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The same ideal of a League of Nations inspired by common devotion to “the Kingdom of God and His righteousness” shines through that glorious Psalm where Jerusalem is depicted as the “mother-city” or metropolis of a God-fearing world, in which Israel’s bitterest enemies and those most widely removed from her influence—the persecutors Egypt and Babylon, the “uncircumcised” Philistines, the aggressive dominion of Tyre, whose ambitions seemed all for worldly wealth and splendour, and distant Ethiopia, the type of heathen darkness—are embraced in the knowledge and fear of Jehovah, all of them counted among the children, and all enjoying the full rights of citizenship—a true fore-shadowing of the time when there shall be “neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

“On holy mountains is Jehovah’s foundation,  
And the Almighty Himself will upbuild it ;

<sup>1</sup> This prophecy presupposes a time when there was already a considerable Jewish settlement in Egypt. For “the city of destruction” in ver. 18 we should read either “the city of the sun,” *i.e.* Heliopolis, or “the city of the lion,” *i.e.* Leontopolis, where a Jewish Temple to Jehovah was built by Onias IV., the legitimate heir of the high-priesthood of Jerusalem, about 160 B.C.

## The Faith of Isaiah

For Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion  
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.  
Glorious things are spoken of thee,  
Zion, the city of God :  
' Rahab (Egypt) and Babylon I mention among  
those that know me,  
Philistia likewise, and Tyre, with Cush ;  
But Zion—she shall be called Mother,  
For each and all were born in her.'  
Yea, Jehovah shall count, while enrolling her  
peoples,  
' This one was born there, and that one was  
born there.'  
So they sing, as they dance,  
' All my springs are in thee ' " (Ps. lxxxvii.).

A heroic attempt was made by the Church of the Middle Ages to build up a Holy Catholic Empire in which men should live together in peace under the impulse of a common faith. Unhappily, it was carried through at the expense of nationality. The inevitable result was the revolt of the peoples, and the breaking up of Christendom into many separate units, often clashing, struggling, and warring with one another. Thinkers like St. Pierre,<sup>1</sup> Kant<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> *Projet de paix perpétuelle* (Utrecht, 1713-17).

<sup>2</sup> In his *Principle of Progress* (1793) Kant had already insisted that there is no possible remedy against the evils of militarism except "a system of international right based upon public laws upheld by force, to which every State must submit, analogous to the civic or political rights of individuals within any given

## The League of Nations

Mazzini<sup>1</sup> dreamed their dreams of "perpetual peace;" poets like Burns and Tennyson sang of a time when

"Man to man the world o'er  
Shall brothers be for a' that,"

State." In his *Treatise on Eternal Peace* (1795) he canvasses the question more thoroughly. After a few preliminary sections on the menace of standing armies and the inviolable right of even the smallest State to live its own life without interference from others, he lays down the three main conditions of peace: (1) "The civil constitution in every State shall be republican" (*i.e.*, representative); (2) "The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free States;" (3) "The rights of men as world-citizens shall be limited by the rules of hospitality in general." With a renewed insistence on right as the only valid principle in politics as well as personal conduct, he further urges the union of "neighbouring and distant States alike, so as to reach a settlement of their disputes by legal processes such as would prevail in a universal State," and ends by an earnest plea for publicity in all matters of international concern, for "no actions bearing on the rights of other men, whose maxims do not admit of publicity, can be just." In his *Metaphysic of Morals* (1797) he elaborates the idea of a "permanent Congress of Nations" as the only means of safeguarding peace. "It is only by a Congress of this kind that the idea of a public law of nations can be established, and that the settlement of their differences by the mode of a civil process rather than by the barbarous means of war can be realised."

<sup>1</sup> His early *Manifesto of Young Italy* (1831) calls for an "association of all the peoples, and of all free men, in one mission of progress embracing the whole of humanity," as the logical and moral implicate of the redemption of Italy. His *Fraternity of Young Europe* (1834) is the first serious attempt to rebuild national life on this basis. In his articles in *La Jeune Suisse* (1835-36) he gives fuller expression to the idea. "Humanity is the association of nationalities, the alliance of the peoples, in order to work out their missions in peace and love; the organisation of free and equal peoples that shall advance without hindrance or impediment—each supporting and profiting by the other's aid—towards the progressive development of one line of the thought of God, the line inscribed by Him upon the cradle, the past life, the national idiom, and the physiognomy of each. . . . The ruling principle of international law will no longer be to secure the weakness of others, but the amelioration of all through the work of all: the progress of each for the benefit of the others" (*Life and Writings*, III. pp. 13f.). The same note is sounded in his *Duties of Man* (1844) and *The Holy Alliance of the Peoples* (1849), with its appeal for a Supreme Council of the Nations, to safeguard and promote the general well-being. In his still later *Europe: its Condition and Prospects* (1852) he has foresight enough to invite America to join with Europe in this high enterprise, and thus to help in "the laying of the first stone of that religious temple of humanity which we all foresee," and which is "a labour well worthy the co-operation of the two worlds" (*op. cit.*, VI. p. 265).

## The Faith of Isaiah

or looked forward in straining vision

“Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the  
battle-flags were furl’d

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the  
world ;”

but the practical man went on his way, scoffing at the visionaries, and relying on his armaments and balance of power to preserve at least the appearance of peace. Now the idealist has triumphed, and on the ruins of our militaristic civilisation there has been built up the solid framework of a League of Nations bound together by solemn covenants to maintain a real peace on earth. The constitution of this League is truly the Magna Charta of humanity. But its successful working depends entirely on the spirit we infuse into it. In one of the most illuminating passages of his book on *The New Freedom*, President Wilson tells us how he had long been wrestling with the problem of the American Constitution, unable clearly to trace its inner motive and structural design, when one day he entertained a distinguished Scottish thinker, who pointed out quite casually how “in every generation all sorts of speculations and thinking tend to fall under the formula of the dominant thought of the age,” the outlook of the eighteenth century, for example, being governed by the Newtonian hypothesis of gravitation, and that of the nineteenth by the



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Darwinian theory of evolution, or vital progress. That remark, he says, gave him the key to his problem. The American Constitution was drawn up on Newtonian lines. It provided all manner of "checks and balances" to keep the machine in order, but it lacked vitality and spring. What is now needed, he urges, is to Darwinise the Constitution, to give it life, movement, flexibility and energy.<sup>1</sup> Too many of our modern Utopias are likewise built on Newtonian principles. As systems they may be perfect enough, but they neglect the human element, and therefore have no driving force. One can easily conceive of a League of Nations lapsing into the vicious old rivalry of powers, without either inspiration or hope for the betterment of humanity. What we need with all our schemes is, in President Wilson's words, to Darwinise them, or, as Christ is the crown of evolution, to Christianise them, to charge them full of the spirit that emanates from Him. We must, in fact, direct our international policy, no less than our ordinary conduct as peace-loving citizens, by the fourfold rule of freedom, justice, truth, and brotherhood. As Kant and Mazzini perceived a century ago, peace can be safeguarded only through an association of free nations, working out their legitimate destinies without let or hindrance from others. And in their relations to one another the nations must respect

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 38f.



## The Faith of Isaiah

the same maxims of justice, honour and truth as individuals.<sup>1</sup> Macchiavellism must be banished as completely from the code-book of statesmanship as it is from the heart and conscience of Christian gentlemen. Duplicity must give place to fair dealing with one another, intrigue to openness of purpose, suspicion to mutual trust and loyalty, self-seeking to the higher principle of brotherhood. God has "made of one blood every nation of men," and has ordained that each should fulfil its purpose in the fellowship of all. We must thus strive as far as possible to understand the mentality of other nations, to sympathise with their point of view, to honour their virtues and help them in their weakness, to treat them in general as we would be treated ourselves. So shall God's Kingdom come, and His will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> "What we seek is the reign of law based upon the consent of the governed and sustained by the organised opinion of mankind." This involves as the third of its four principles "the consent of all nations to be governed in their conduct towards each other by the same principles of honour and of respect for the common law of civilised society that govern the individual citizens of all modern States in their relations with one another, to the end that all promises and covenants may be sacredly observed, no private plots or conspiracies hatched, no selfish injuries wrought with impunity, and a mutual trust established upon the handsome foundation of a mutual respect for right."—President Wilson's Address at Mount Vernon, July 4th, 1918.

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